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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Executive Committee
Fifth meeting
Beirut, 18-19 December 2018

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Implementation of recommendations made by the Executive Committee at its fourth meeting

Summary

The Executive Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its fourth meeting at the United Nations House in Beirut, on 13 and 14 December 2017. It issued a set of recommendations to member States and to the ESCWA secretariat. The present document sets out the measures taken by the secretariat to implement the recommendations issued to it.

Executive Committee members are invited to take note of the implementation level and to comment on the steps needed to further operationalize the recommendations.

Recommendations made by the Executive Committee at its fourth meeting to the ESCWA secretariat and measures taken to implement them

Recommendation (a)

Submit at the thirtieth ESCWA session an integrated report on "Implementing the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda" setting out member States' efforts in implementing the Doha Declaration at the national level.

Implementation

At the thirtieth ESCWA session, the secretariat presented a comprehensive and detailed report on the measures taken to implement the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[1] as a complement to a previous report presented to the Executive Committee at its third meeting.[2] The presentation focused on achievements by the ESCWA divisions in implementing the Doha Declaration. The secretariat said that the outputs of ministerial declarations were generally linked to the programme of work through an integrated approach adopted by specialized divisions.

Representatives of several member States reviewed efforts made under sections of the Declaration addressed to them. The representatives of Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, the State of Palestine and Yemen presented national efforts in that regard, notably incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into national development plans, developing institutional structures in relevant ministries to guide policies, adopting development plans and/or strategies in line with the 2030 Agenda, and continuing collaboration with ESCWA in building capacity and preparing national reports, especially voluntary national reviews to be submitted to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Recommendation (b)

Stress the importance of providing the documents set out in the Committee's agenda at least three weeks before the start of the meeting.

Implementation

ESCWA has made efforts to ensure that documents set out in intergovernmental meeting agendas are disseminated on time. Most documents for the thirtieth ESCWA session, held from 25 to 28 June 2018, were uploaded on the ESCWA website by 31 May 2018. Moreover, most documents for the nineteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics, held from 26 to 28 November 2018, were uploaded by 6 November 2018, in line with this recommendation. Furthermore, most documents for the current meeting of the Executive Committee, held on 17 and 18 December 2018, were uploaded on 26 November 2018. In some cases, delays occur when documents include important international developments that took place shortly before ESCWA intergovernmental meetings.

Recommendation (c)

Highlight international developments in presentations given at Executive Committee meetings, especially those related to new resolutions on topics discussed by the General Assembly of the United Nations and its various organs.

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[1] E/ESCWA/30/10.

[2] E/ESCWA/2017/EC.3/3(Part II).

Implementation

At the thirtieth ESCWA session, presentations were made on key global developments regarding development and their impact on member States, including megatrends in the transport sector and their impact on the Arab region[3] and links between information and communications technology processes and sustainable development.[4]

The provisional agenda of the current meeting of the Executive Committee includes documents and presentations on developments in financing for development: progress in implementing the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in the Arab region; the Arab Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data: progress in implementation; supporting member States in the periodic review of progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years after their adoption; the Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development: Five years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration; the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and its relevance to the Arab region; and climate change in the Arab region: relevant regional and international developments.

Recommendation (d)

Focus on ensuring that training sessions are more responsive to member States' needs, while taking into account country specificities and disparities between Arab countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Implementation

ESCWA has strived to ensure that its training sessions are more responsive to member States' needs, while taking into account country specificities. It undertook 79 advisory missions and capacity-building activities in 2018, as shown in the report on technical cooperation activities for 2018 presented to the current Executive Committee meeting.[5] It has also developed training tools on several issues, such as social justice, social protection and participation, which include reviews of various national experiences. Key tools are a training manual on incorporating the principles of social justice in preparing development plans and policies, a manual on building capacity for formulating participatory social protection policies, a manual on building capacity for assessing and measuring social and economic inequality in the Arab region,[6] and a manual on formulating and implementing equality-oriented policies in Arab countries.[7] A workshop, held in Cairo from 18 to 20 September 2018 with the participation of several specialists and policymakers concerned with disability, focused on promoting a common understanding of appropriate data for monitoring disability-related SDGs, and on preparing an Arab framework for disability indicators.

ESCWA training activities meet national needs in terms of climate change-related activities linked to SDG 13 on taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, and activities on disaster risk reduction related to SDG 11 on making cities and human developments inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. ESCWA is considering those issues in the context of water scarcity, land degradation, agricultural productivity, and extreme weather events in the region. Moreover, training sessions were held in July 2018 to build the capacity of national officials in the water and agriculture sectors and of experts, which were funded from extrabudgetary sources and the regular programme for technical cooperation. The training sessions included the eleventh regional training workshop on capacity development for climate change negotiations for

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[3] E/ESCWA/30/4.

[4] E/ESCWA/30/7.

[5] E/ESCWA/EC.5/2018/13.

[6] E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.20.

[7] E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/Technical Paper.11.

the Arab countries, held in Cairo from 13 to 15 November 2018. Additional developments in that field are set out in a paper to be presented at the current meeting.

Approaches to evaluating institutional capacity have been adapted to the specificities of Iraq and Yemen. Around 25 Yemeni and 25 Iraqi civil servants were trained on those approaches at two workshops, the first on evaluating the capacity of Yemeni institutions in the fields of planning, budgeting and coordinating (Amman, 24-26 October 2018) and the second on evaluating institutional capacity in Al-Hamdaniya District (Nineveh Governorate, Iraq) in the field of implementing adopted plans and coordinating between various institutions and organizations (Beirut, 4-6 December 2018).

Around 30 civil servants were trained in Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman and the State of Palestine in functional competencies at a joint Jordanian-Palestinian workshop on developing functional competency systems (Amman, 12-14 December 2017). A preparatory regional workshop is expected to be held to develop a common Arab framework for the competencies of senior cadres in the public sector from the perspective of the 2030 Agenda (Beirut, 11-13 December 2018).

The ESCWA secretariat organized three consecutive workshops on disseminating and applying the principles of good governance in Tunisian government departments, which benefited 50 civil servants (Tunis, 17-18 July 2018; 19-20 July 2018; and 23-24 July 2018). Moreover, a booklet was published on disseminating the principles of good governance in the Tunisian public sector, focusing on mechanisms to combat corruption and promote transparency in the country's constitutional and legal frameworks, which was distributed to stakeholders in Tunisia.

Regarding trade policies, the ESCWA secretariat organized two regional training sessions: the first on the impact of joining the Arab Customs Union on the Palestinian economy and mechanisms to develop customs procedures (Amman, 6 September 2018); and the second on monitoring and evaluating a trade integration toolkit (Beirut, 10-11 July 2018). Concerning financing for development, a national workshop was held to provide a new perspective on fiscal and monetary policy in Bahrain (Manama, 23-26 April 2018).

Recommendation (e)

Continue coordinating between ESCWA, the League of Arab States and other regional and international organizations on implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Implementation

ESCWA and the League of Arab States have forged a strategic partnership in all areas of their joint work, especially issues related to following up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region. The following are key joint efforts between the two organizations:

- Organizing and holding the annual Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, in collaboration with the ESCWA secretariat, the League's secretariat and the Regional Coordination Mechanism that comprises all United Nations organizations and bodies working in the Arab region;

- Preparing the periodic Situation Report on International Migration, which is related to the implementation of the SDGs on international migration, by the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region that is chaired by ESCWA, the League's secretariat and the International Organization for Migration;

- Organizing the Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development: Five Years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration, in collaboration with the League's secretariat and the United Nations Population Fund, which was held in Beirut from 30 October to 1 November 2018 with wide stakeholder participation;

- Continuing the partnership to support the development of an Arab strategy on poverty reduction following the publication of the first edition of the Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report, which was a collaborative effort between ESCWA, the League's secretariat, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative in September 2017 on the sidelines of the General Assembly;

- Coordinating to hold an expert group meeting on pursuing improved shared water resources management within the framework of global and regional agreements (Beirut, 8-9 December 2018). Topics of discussion include countries' responses to questionnaires on target 5 of SDG 6 on ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Recommendation (f)

Prepare a study on significant trends in the transport sector and their impact on the Arab region, such as the One Belt One Road Initiative, northern navigation, and new technologies including artificial intelligence.

Implementation

The ESCWA secretariat prepared a concept note entitled "Megatrends in the transport sector and their impact on the Arab region",[8] which was presented at the thirtieth ESCWA session as part of the ESCWA project to develop a vision on multimodal transport in the Arab region. The secretariat also prepared a background paper entitled "The technological revolution and its impact on the future of the transport sector in the Arab region", which was presented to the Committee on Transport and Logistics at its nineteenth session (Beirut, 26-28 November 2018).

Recommendation (g)

Present the project on a multimodal transport system in the Arab region to specialized Arab ministerial councils to ensure high-level political support for the project, and urge regional and international financing institutions to mobilize resources for its implementation.

Implementation

The ESCWA secretariat presented a project on formulating a common strategic vision for developing a multimodal transport system in the Arab region[9] at the Regional Consultation Meeting on Corridors for Vital Connectivity in the Arab Region, held in Beirut on 23 April 2018 with the support of the Islamic Development Bank. Participants included representatives of the World Bank, the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab Maghreb Union, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Africa, and several regional associations involved in transport and trade. The project was also presented to the World Bank at a meeting held at its headquarters in Beirut on 11 August 2018; and at a forum on determining the impact of the Silk Road on Arab countries from an integrated perspective, held in Alexandria, Egypt, on 17 and 18 September 2018 in collaboration with the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport and the secretariat of the League of Arab States. The project was also presented to the German Agency for International Cooperation on 10 September 2018.

Recommendation (h)

Publish the Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report periodically; continue working with Arab countries and organizations and support regional efforts to develop programmes to end multidimensional poverty; and

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[8] E/ESCWA/30/4.

[9] https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/rwy_lskw_lttwyr_nzm_nql_mtdd_lnmt_fy_lmntq_lrby_0.pdf (in Arabic).

provide support to member States, upon request, in measuring and reducing multidimensional poverty by formulating and implementing related policies and plans and by building individual and institutional capacity.

Implementation

As part of efforts to publish the second edition of the Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report, the ESCWA secretariat established an advisory committee to review the approach to measuring multidimensional poverty to make it more consistent with the situation in Arab countries. Following requests to the secretariat from several countries, ESCWA is currently preparing to provide technical support to strengthen national efforts on poverty reduction.

Recommendation (i)

Conduct research at the national level to calculate the economic cost of violence against women, upon countries' request and in line with the realities, specificities and needs of each society; and encourage policymakers to take appropriate measures to intensify efforts towards preventing and protecting women from violence, and strengthening the exchange of successful experiences between countries that have calculated the economic cost of violence against women and the countries aiming to do so.

Implementation

After ESCWA finished designing the first Arab model to calculate the economic cost of violence against women, regional consultations were held with national women's machineries and statistical apparatuses to introduce them to the model, stress the importance of estimating the cost of violence against women, and showcase how to use the findings of the project to make proposals to end violence against women.

Several countries, including Iraq, Lebanon, the State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia, submitted requests for ESCWA technical support in preparing studies to estimate the economic cost of violence against women. Efforts included holding consultations with all national stakeholders, preparing preliminary studies on the types of violence against women and on available administrative and statistical data, developing workplans to calculate the cost in accordance with country specificities, and providing technical guidance on designing national surveys on the issue. ESCWA, in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund, is currently preparing the first Arab guide on measuring the cost of violence against women, which documents Arab experiences in that area.

Recommendation (j)

Prepare a study on the economic and social costs in member States facing challenges related to the Committee's mandate, upon countries' request, with special focus on supporting rebuilding and recovery programmes.

Implementation

ESCWA is undertaking several research activities, including some on assessing the impact of conflict on human capital by analysing household surveys in Iraq and Yemen. The findings of those analyses are expected to be published in early 2019. ESCWA is also preparing a study on monitoring the SDGs in conflict-affected Arab countries: analysing partial data from household surveys, which will also be published in early 2019.

Recommendation (k)

Stress the importance of linking the ESCWA Statistical Committee with the other ESCWA subsidiary bodies to enhance communication between statistical apparatuses and other development sectors; and consider the possibility of holding joint sessions with other committees to discuss various statistical challenges.

Implementation

The ESCWA secretariat is striving to link the work of the ESCWA Statistical Committee with that of other ESCWA subsidiary bodies. It has developed an intergovernmental subcommittee under the Committee on Women on gender and the SDGs, comprising representatives of national women's machineries and national statistical offices. Two workshops were held in 2018 to build the capacity of subcommittee members and support national efforts to prepare voluntary national reviews on the 2030 Agenda, with a special focus on incorporating SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

The ESCWA secretariat is currently working on holding a session of the Statistical Committee in late 2019 alongside that of another ESCWA subsidiary body, so as to discuss a common issue resulting in recommendations that strengthen links between statistics and other development sectors. The Chair of the Statistical Committee will be invited to represent the Committee at other subsidiary body sessions, depending on the issues being discussed, so as to enhance communication between committees.

Recommendation (l)

Continue working on developing frameworks for technical cooperation activities with interested countries, and draw upon resolutions and reports by the General Assembly and its various organs when providing such technical support.

Implementation

In 2018, ESCWA completed its work on a technical cooperation framework with Iraq. In collaboration with the Governments of Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, two technical cooperation workshops were held to develop technical cooperation frameworks for the two countries (Amman, 13 May 2018; and Damascus, 3 June 2018). Work has begun on technical cooperation frameworks for Kuwait, the State of Palestine and Yemen, and on reviewing the current technical cooperation framework with the Sudan.

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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Implementation of the Beirut Consensus on Technology for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region and resolutions adopted at the thirtieth ESCWA session

Summary

At the close of the thirtieth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), held in Beirut from 25 to 28 June 2018, member States adopted the Beirut Consensus on Technology for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region and a set of resolutions.

The present document reviews the secretariat's plan for implementing the Beirut Consensus and the resolutions. Activities set out in the Beirut Consensus are provided in bold, followed by measures to be implemented by the secretariat. The resolutions and related implementation measures are also summarized.

Executive Committee members are invited to take note of current and planned activities to implement the Beirut Consensus and provide comments thereon, and to review measures to be implemented at the national level in that regard.

Introduction

1. At the close of the thirtieth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), held in Beirut from 25 to 28 June 2018, member States adopted the Beirut Consensus on Technology for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region and a set of resolutions. The present document comprises two chapters: the first sets out planned follow-up measures and activities implemented under the Beirut Consensus prior to the fifth meeting of the Executive Committee; and the second covers the implementation of resolutions adopted at the thirtieth ESCWA session.

I. IMPLEMENTING THE BEIRUT CONSENSUS ON TECHNOLOGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB REGION

2. The Beirut Consensus confirms the commitment of member States to place technology and innovation at the heart of an inclusive and sustainable development process in the Arab region. It stresses the importance of developing strong technology ecosystems and quality education systems to ensure decent employment opportunities. It also highlights the role that technology can play in achieving social integration, good governance and environmental sustainability, and in preventing conflicts and reducing their threats and the risk of disaster. Member States affirmed their commitment to mobilizing and increasing financing and investment at the national and regional levels in the field of technology and innovation, especially in the least developed countries, to support national development processes and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They emphasized the importance of the work conducted by the ESCWA secretariat and its impact on regional cooperation and integration, and requested the secretariat to continue its activities in that regard while focusing on promoting the role of technology and innovation in stimulating development.

3. The present document sets out current and proposed measures for implementing the Beirut Consensus. The implementation of the Beirut Consensus will be achieved through two main approaches: benefiting from the secretariat's varied specializations to fully integrate between technology and the various dimensions of sustainable development; and ensuring consistency in the implementation of the key areas of ESCWA work, namely generating knowledge on development challenges, building consensus on addressing them and responding to them by providing direct support to member States through targeted technical cooperation activities. In the Beirut Consensus, member States requested the ESCWA secretariat to respond to the following requests, in particular.

(a) Foster coherent regional responses to rapidly evolving technological advancements, supporting norms and standard-setting and fostering an enabling ecosystem, anchored in the 2030 Agenda, with a focus on the most vulnerable segments of society;

Current or proposed measures

4. The ESCWA secretariat is working on implementing regional initiatives aimed at supporting member States' efforts to keep pace with rapid technological developments, as follows:

- Establishing in 2018 a regional framework for Internet governance entitled "Arab roadmap for Internet governance".[1] The secretariat is implementing the framework by convening meetings with relevant stakeholders. An expert group meeting on the interlinkages between Internet governance and cybersecurity was held in Beirut in December 2018, preceded by open consultations of the Arab Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group convened in Beirut in July 2018, in preparation for the fifth Arab Internet Governance Forum to be held in 2019;
- Preparing a report on digital technologies for development, which addresses the status and inclusiveness of information and communications technology (ICT) and digital technologies and

[1] https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/arab-roadmap-internet-governance-en.pdf.

their role in empowering various social groups, in line with the 2030 Agenda, while focusing on the most vulnerable groups. The report is expected to be published in the second half of 2019;

- Preparing a study on innovation and technology for achieving the SDGs in the Arab region, which provides approaches to innovation policies that can be adopted to devise solutions and applications based on new technologies that may contribute to achieving the SDGs;
- Preparing a study on the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on development in Arab countries;
- Preparing a guide on managing intellectual property rights for research and development in the Arab region.

(b) Provide evidence-based policy advice to promote structural transformation through technology to enhance productivity and sustainability, thereby addressing the root causes of multidimensional poverty, promoting economic and social integration, creating decent employment, and research the impact of technology and innovation on sectoral employment generation;

Current or proposed measures

5. The ESCWA secretariat is currently preparing reports and studies on the role of technology in achieving structural transformations in development and on convening expert group meetings, as follows:

- Preparing a study on the inclusiveness of and empowerment through digital finance in the Arab region. The study identifies the enabling environment required to benefit from financial technology (FinTech) and the opportunities it provides to achieve digital financial inclusion and the empowerment through digital finance of poor and vulnerable groups, and of various small and medium projects that rely on technology and innovation in the Arab region;
- Drafting a report on the 2019 employment survey, which analyses the productivity shortfalls of private enterprises in several Arab countries, and addresses the role of innovation in increasing productivity and in identifying employment growth patterns in the private sector;
- Launching the second round of a survey on the use of geographic information systems (GIS) in statistics on the environment, land use and climate change, so as to improve the quality and integration of information available to decision makers;
- Issuing a report on fostering innovation in small and medium enterprises in the Arab region[2] in 2018, which tackled the status of small and medium enterprises in the Arab region and indicated the need to develop those enterprises as a lever for achieving the SDGS;
- Organizing an expert group meeting on artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies and their impact on various industrial sectors, which was held in Beirut in November 2018;
- Organizing an expert group meeting of digital technologies for development in the Arab region, to be held in early 2019;
- Organizing a training workshop on planning for population and household censuses by using technology, which was held from 24 to 27 July 2018, aimed at enhancing dialogue between the users and producers of data from population and household censuses and at improving data use in planning, research and development;
- Organizing a workshop on incorporating administrative data, big data and GIS for SDG indicators, to be held in 2019.

[2] E/ESCWA/TDD/2018/TP.2.

6. In addition to the above-mentioned studies and meetings, the ESCWA secretariat, through its activities in the field of economic modelling, will continue to provide technological tools to assist decision makers, planners and economists in developing evidence-based policies to achieve structural transformations.

7. The ESCWA secretariat formed a team comprising staff members from various specializations to follow up on the issue of big data to assess Arab countries' readiness to benefit from them, especially in development planning and measuring progress in implementing the SDGs. This forms part of efforts by the secretariat to complement traditional statistical data with new data sources, including administrative data, big data and GIS. Expected accomplishments include building capacity to measure SDG indicators.

(c) Raise awareness on technologies for the inclusion of youth, older persons and persons with disabilities in areas including education, employment and access to public services, and develop informative material on the role of technology in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the Arab region;

Current or proposed measures

8. The ESCWA secretariat is preparing a report to be published in 2019 on innovation and entrepreneurship to generate employment opportunities for women and young people. The report reviews education and employment levels of women and young people and their links to innovation and entrepreneurship in the Arab region. It also highlights the importance of developing entrepreneurship in the Arab region to achieve the SDGs, proposes policies to improve entrepreneurship, and suggests initiatives to stimulate entrepreneurship so as to generate new employment opportunities for women and young people.

9. The ESCWA secretariat is preparing a study on technology as a renewed hope for gender equality in the Arab region, which develops a vison of using ICTs to strengthen the implementation of SDG 5 targets and achieve gender equality. The secretariat is also drafting a policy brief that highlights the role of ICTs in combatting violence against women in cities. The brief assesses the positive impact of technology in combating violence against women, demonstrating the importance of the issue by analysing the links between the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

10. The above-mentioned reports that the secretariat is currently working on, especially the report on digital development in the Arab region and the study on the inclusiveness of and empowerment through digital finance and its prospects in the Arab region, in addition to a study on the impact of advanced technologies on education and young people conducted by the secretariat in collaboration with the Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development in Lebanon, also respond to the present request.

11. The ESCWA secretariat will also prepare information material to raise awareness on the role of frontier technologies in sustainable development, especially nanotechnologies, biotechnology and artificial intelligence.

(d) Share experiences and best practices in technology transfer and adaptation through North-South and South-South cooperation, building member States' capacity to access financial resources;

Current or proposed measures

12. The ESCWA secretariat will formulate policy guidelines on technology transfer, development and use at the national level, aimed at forging partnerships between universities, the industrial sector, research centres and other stakeholders to support local industry.

13. The secretariat organized a regional workshop on open government in the Arab region, which was held in Beirut from 25 to 27 September 2018. It also organized a national training session on open government and open data in the Sudan on 29 November 2018.

14. The ESCWA Technology Centre prepared a report on science and technology parks. The report, which focuses on the governance of science and technology parks, was discussed at a regional workshop held in Khartoum from 22 to 24 October 2018. In 2019, the Centre will hold an expert group meeting to discuss a report that clarifies global standards for managing science and technology parks, and to continue coordinating technology parks' efforts in the Arab region.

15. An informal Arab group on population and household censuses, supported by the ESCWA secretariat, is working on transferring expertise on the use of technology in conducting and analysing population and housing censuses and on incorporating the geographic spatial dimension in those censuses to improve data quality, since electronic questionnaires enable the validation of data at the time of collection.

(e) Coordinate national and regional policymaking on Internet governance, promote the Arab regional perspective in the international arena and provide support in researching and defining negotiation positions on contentious Internet governance issues:

Current or proposed measures

16. Measures to coordinate regional policies and plans on Internet governance include developing the regional framework on Internet governance issues entitled "Arab roadmap for Internet governance", as mentioned in paragraph 4 of the present document.

17. The ESCWA secretariat, on behalf of the Arab Internet Governance Forum, participated in organizing several events at the thirteenth annual meeting of the Internet Governance Forum, held in Paris from 12 to 14 November 2018. Participants adopted a document on Internet trust and security, on which the secretariat will develop a regional perspective and position.

(f) Support in filling the legislative and regulation vacuum around unregulated frontier technology issues through policy-oriented research:

Current or proposed measures

18. The secretariat will strengthen the role of the ESCWA Technology Centre in bridging legislative and regulatory gaps, including by developing ethical rules on the use of technologies in the areas of climate, the environment, agriculture, energy and water.

19. The secretariat has prepared a study on fostering open government in the Arab region, which was launched at the thirtieth ESCWA session. As a follow-up, the secretariat held a training workshop in Beirut in September 2018 on open government in the Arab region, which tackled the legal and legislative dimensions of open government.

20. In December 2018, the ESCWA secretariat held an expert group meeting on the interlinkages between Internet governance and cybersecurity, aimed at examining legislative and regulatory gaps in the digital technology field through research on Internet security and trust.

21. The secretariat will develop a general framework for national strategies on frontier technologies, which will include global best practices, and will continue providing support for member States to benefit from the framework in developing their national policies, including related legislation.

(g) Reinforce multi-stakeholder partnerships on technology and innovation, including convening the Arab High-level Forum on the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the Arab Internet Governance Forum;

Current or proposed measures

22. The ESCWA secretariat, in collaboration with several international organizations and regional bodies concerned with digital technology, will hold the second session of the Arab High-level Forum on WSIS and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Beirut in 2019. It is also organizing, in collaboration with several Internet governance stakeholders, the fifth Arab Internet Governance Forum, to be held in the second half of 2019.

23. The secretariat is planning to hold expert group meetings in 2019 on intellectual property systems to stimulate innovation in Arab countries, and on innovation and technology to achieve the 2030 Agenda. It will collaborate in that regard with many international organizations and regional bodies concerned with innovation, technology and intellectual property.

(h) Support member States in adopting emerging green technologies to address the main regional socioeconomic and environmental challenges;

Current or proposed measures

24. The ESCWA Technology Centre supports member States' efforts aimed at benefiting from green technologies. The Centre's work programme will focus on enhancing green technology transfer and adaptation and on broadening the scope of its use, with special attention to priority sectors for the region, especially the agricultural sector. The Centre's work programme for 2019 includes regional studies and expert group meetings on agricultural technologies, notably those related to rationalizing water use aimed at reusing wastewater, saving energy and adapting the agricultural sector to climate change.

25. In the first half of 2019, the Centre will organize a workshop on investing in sustainable technologies and on how to attract investor in this key emerging area.

(i) Support networking and create a participatory platform for cooperation between Arab States on frontier technology issues.

Current and proposed measures

26. Intergovernmental meetings convened or prepared by ESCWA fall under the present recommendation, including the second session of the Committee on Technology for Development to be held in the first half of 2019.

27. In 2019, a project will be developed to examine with donors the establishment of an interactive platform that supports documenting the use of innovative green technologies in the Arab region.

28. The secretariat aims to promote the work of the regional communication network of national technology transfer offices in several Arab countries.

29. The secretariat will continue holding meetings of the Council of Arab e-Government Programme Directors. The seventh meeting will be held in 2019.

II. RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT THE THIRTIETH ESCWA SESSION

329 (XXX) Establishment of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies in the Arab Region

Resolution summary

The resolution welcomes the establishment of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies and identifies its main functions. It requests the secretariat to take the necessary measures, in coordination with the League of Arab States, to ensure effective implementation of the activities pertaining to the second phase of the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR), in cooperation with the relevant international, regional and national institutions.

Implementation measures

30. The implementation measures for this resolution will be presented under the agenda item on climate change.

330 (XXX) Support for the Palestinian people

Resolution summary

The resolution welcomes the establishment of the Palestine Unit under the Emerging and Conflict-related Issues Division of the ESCWA secretariat, whose functions include supporting Palestinian institutions in their development efforts, and monitoring and documenting the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation. It requests the ESCWA secretariat to continue supporting the Palestinian people and their institutions by providing normative and technical needs-based support to Palestinian institutions, including research and studies, and collecting and analysing data to develop policies and programmes aimed at mitigating the impact of the occupation and related practices.

Implementation measures

31. The note of the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, which was prepared by ESCWA, was presented to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, each of which adopted two resolutions on the topic. In that context, the secretariat has prepared a summary of the main points presented in the Note, which was sent to member States in July 2018.

32. The secretariat is preparing two research papers: the first on the cumulative effect of occupation on industrial sectors in the occupied Palestinian territory; and the second on Israeli laws and their impact on the prospects for an independent and viable Palestinian State in accordance with the internationally agreed framework.

33. In 2019, the secretariat will map the Israeli policies, practices and measures since the start of the occupation, and their transfer, interaction, interlinkages and dynamics, as part of greater efforts to evaluate the cumulative and multi-layered impact of the Israeli occupation.

34. In November 2018, the secretariat organized events to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, including activities to raise awareness of the suffering and rights of the Palestinian people.

331 (XXX) Comprehensive approaches to technical cooperation in response to member States' emerging needs

Resolution summary

The resolution underlines that there is scope for better long-term planning of ESCWA technical cooperation activities to ensure optimal deployment of resources and accountability for implementation, while maintaining flexibility. It expresses appreciation for the ongoing collaboration with United Nations country teams on the development of technical cooperation activities by the secretariat and member States according to their priorities, and for the efforts exerted by the secretariat to provide support to United Nations development entities operating in the Arab region. It requests the secretariat to leverage its coordination role among United Nations regional development entities in the establishment of mechanisms to provide guidance for technical cooperation activities along with member States and to enhance their impact.

Implementation measures

35. The implementation measures of this resolution will be presented under the agenda item on technical cooperation.

332 (XXX) Developing the work of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development

Resolution summary

The resolution approves the splitting of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development into two committees denominated "Committee on Financing for Development in ESCWA member States" and "Committee on Trade Policies in ESCWA member States", which would each hold biennial sessions, without any additional financial implications.

Implementation measures

36. The ESCWA secretariat will submit this resolution to the Economic and Social Council for adoption at its next session, given that structural changes to ESCWA intergovernmental mechanisms should be approved by the Council.

333 (XXX) Adoption of the proposed amendments to the strategic framework and programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019

Resolution summary

The resolution adopts the proposed amendments to the strategic framework and programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019, taking comments made by member States into account. It requests the secretariat to follow up on the implementation of the programme of work and include therein the activities required to address challenges that may emerge in the Arab region.

Implementation measures

37. The secretariat is implementing the programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019 in line with the approved amendments.

334 (XXX) Adoption of the reports of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Resolution summary

The Commission considered the recommendations set out in the reports of the subsidiary bodies on their sessions held in the period between the fourth meeting of the Executive Committee (13-14 December 2017) and its thirtieth session (25-28 June 2018), namely the report on the eighth session of the Committee on Women,[3] the report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Social Development,[4] the report of the eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics,[5] the report on the eleventh session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development (liberalization of foreign trade);[6] and the report on the twelfth session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development (focus on finance);[7] and adopted the recommendations set out in the above-mentioned reports of the subsidiary bodies and requests the secretariat to follow up on their implementation.

Implementation measures

38. The secretariat is implementing the recommendations made by subsidiary bodies, and is presenting progress reports to member States on each Committee.

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[3] E/ESCWA/ECW/2017/IG.1/7/Report.

[4] E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/6/Report.

[5] E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/9/Report.

[6] E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/11/Report.

[7] E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.2/9/Report.

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Financing for development: progress in implementing the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in the Arab region

Summary

The present document provides an assessment of global financing for development (FfD) outcomes and recommendations from a regional perspective. It makes statistical inferences from the numbers of resolutions and reports issued in 2018 related to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (hereafter the Action Agenda) to provide an indication of prevalent implementation gaps. It also reviews key FfD messages of United Nations entities and other international stakeholders through a regional lens, and offers a region-sensitive evaluation of their possible applications, spillovers and enforcement prospects under prevalent risk conditions in the Arab region.

While progress has been made in implementing global FfD commitments, their benefits have neither been shared across regions nor have they ended inequalities in FfD within countries. In the Arab region multiple challenges continue to impede national efforts to capitalize on the multiple financing solutions offered by the Action Agenda. The document cautions against employing generic recommendations in isolation from inequalities and geopolitical dynamics. The region has taken deep steps to integrate into the global economy and is therefore influenced by global tightening conditions, the new wave of investment and trade protectionism. It is also witnessing signs of debt distress. However, ample room still exists to prompt action at the regional level, and Arab countries can adopt measures that would put them on a path towards more sustainable economic growth and development.

Executive Committee members are invited to take note of the key messages and findings contained in the present document and of the activities undertaken to support FfD at the regional level, and to provide guidance for the work of ESCWA in this important area, especially since regional commissions are assuming greater roles to advance the Action Agenda as part of reforming the United Nations Development System.

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Introduction

1. The present document provides a regional perspective on progress in implementing financing for development (FfD) outcomes and in fulfilling the commitments arising from the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (hereafter the Action Agenda). It identifies major implementation gaps and highlights the need for interventions to advance a particular FfD priority area by drawing statistical inferences from the numbers of related United Nations General Assembly resolutions and reports. It also assesses the Arab region's specificities and FfD challenges by considering the plausible implications of recommendations and conclusions drawn from the first global FfD assessment undertaken by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on Financing for Development. It does so in accordance with the common Arab position on financing for development, which was formulated at the twelfth session of the ESCWA Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development, held in Beirut on 4 and 5 December 2017.

I. FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT RESOLUTIONS AND PROCESSES

2. At its seventy-second session, the General Assembly adopted 313 resolutions, 58 of which (19 per cent) were related to the implementation of FfD outcomes and to the assessment of progress made. The frequency of resolutions on each of the seven FfD priority areas is revealing: the higher the frequency, the greater the number of challenges associated with achieving progress in that particular area.

3. In 2017 and 2018, there were six General Assembly resolutions, and Secretary-General's and Second Committee reports[1] on following up on progress in implementing the Action Agenda. This was equal to the number of resolutions and reports[2] on reforming the international financial system, highlighting how progress in FfD remains intrinsically contingent on global trends and governance of the international financial system.

4. Over the same period, there were eight resolutions and reports[3] on international trade, underscoring mounting concerns about trade and investment protectionism, and challenges facing the multilateral trading system and their implications for FfD. Five resolutions and reports addressed mounting debt concerns, compared with only two on the subject prior to the 2008 global economic crisis. Seven resolutions and reports were dedicated to illicit financial flows and tax evasion/cooperation, and five others addressed other priority areas, including financial inclusion and the economic governance needed to advance global FfD priorities.[4]

5. Only one resolution[5] was issued on international development cooperation, including official development assistance (ODA); only one resolution was adopted on South-South cooperation as well,[6] although developing countries maintain that South-South cooperation remains a complement to, not a substitute for, ODA.

6. In 2017 and 2018, there were some 43 meetings[7] related to FfD, such as the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Forum on Financing for Development follow-up, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development thematic review and side event; the ECOSOC special meeting on international cooperation in tax matters, the Global Infrastructure Forum, and the informal technical briefing

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[1] A/72/419; A/RES/72/208; A/C.2/72/L.50; A/C.2/72/L.18; A/73/427; A/73/86.

[2] A/RES/72/203; A/72/418/Add.2; A/C.2/72/L.19/Rev.1; A/C.2/72/L.19; A/72/306; A/73/280.

[3] A/RES/72/205; A/72/418; A/RES/72/202; A/RES/72/201; A/72/307; A/72/274; A/C.2/72/L.17; A/73/208.

[4] On external debt: A/RES/72/204; A/72/418/Add.3; A/72/253; A/73/180; A/C.2/73/L.11; on illicit financial flows: A/RES/72/207; A/RES/72/57; A/RES/72/40; A/72/418/Add.6; A/C.2/72/L.53; A/C.2/72/L.16; A/RES/72/267; on financial inclusion: A/RES/72/206; A/72/418/Add.5; A/C.2/72/L.51; A/C.2/72/L.10; and on economic development: A/RES/72/213.

[5] A/RES/72/230.

[6] A/RES/72/237.

[7] See http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/events.html.

series on the report of the IATF on Financing for Development, the Secretary-General's High-level Meeting on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Voluntary National Review Lab on Mobilizing Resources for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the First Global Conference of the Platform for Collaboration on Tax –Taxation and the SDGs.

7. At its seventy-third session, the General Assembly held six events on FfD, namely the High-level Meeting on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the Private Sector Forum; an event on the theme "Emerging challenges and shifting paradigms: new perspectives on international co-operation for development"; the Sixth Annual International Conference on Sustainable Development on the theme "Breaking down silos: fostering collaborative action on the SDGs"; an event on the theme "SDG costing and macroeconomics: spending needs for achieving selected SDGs"; and an event organized by Bahrain and the Global Security Institute: The Bahrain Visions Forum.

8. In addition, the Secretary-General hosted a special high-level meeting to launch his Strategy for Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2018-2021),[8] which aims to undertake the following:

(a) Ensure a surge in financing and investments to secure $5-7 trillion to achieve the SDGs;

(b) Take concerted action towards:

- Supporting developing countries' efforts in mobilizing domestic resources through tax reforms and other governance and economic rationalization measures;
- Combatting illicit flows of capital, money laundering and tax evasion;
- Developing innovative financing and mobilizing private investment, such as green bonds and sustainable development bonds.

(c) Propose urgent actions to:

- Align global economic policies and financial systems with the 2030 Agenda;
- Enhance sustainable financing solutions and investments at the regional and country levels;
- Invest in financial innovations, new technologies and digitalization to provide equitable access to finance, especially for those living in marginalized areas.

II. REGIONAL ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS MADE IN FINANCING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

9. In 2018, the IATF released its first integral assessment of progress made in achieving global financing for development outcomes.[9] The assessment is based on findings drawn from analysis and data collected by over 50 United Nations agencies, programmes and international institutions that are IATF members. The assessment nonetheless falls short of measuring financing gaps and of providing remedies for shortcomings. Moreover, regional dimensions are not consistently captured when measuring global progress. Consequently, by overlooking country-specific and regional dynamics, such global assessments may entail an element of bias by 'cherry picking' achievements.

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[8] https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/SG-Financing-Strategy_Sep2018.pdf.

[9] Report of the *Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development - Financing for Development: Progress and Prospects 2018* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.I.5). Available at https://developmentfinance.un.org/sites/developmentfinance.un.org/files/Report_IATF_2018.pdf.

10. The 2018 IATF assessment recognizes that asymmetric progress has been achieved in implementing the different action areas of the Action Agenda. In the Arab region, the situation is dire as there is an FfD reflux: for every dollar in cross-border inflows that the region has mobilized or received, more than double is lost in FfD outflows.[10] The region is thus consistently losing opportunities to finance its development.

11. The assessment also recognizes that escalated geopolitical tensions are derailing FfD progress. Today, the Arab region hosts nearly half of the world's internally displaced people and more than half of the global refugee population. Under the current instability trajectory, the region risks consuming more than half of the projected increase in the global humanitarian aid budget by 2030, an unsustainable situation from both a financing and a development perspective. Moreover, the hefty reconstruction bill of war-torn economies is not being factored into the global FfD costing equation, although it does include selected reconstruction efforts in countries affected by natural disasters.

A. Domestic resource mobilization

1. *Public finance: the SDG social contract and the FfD compact*

12. It is vital to enhance the collection of domestic public revenues and to spend those resources more effectively to deliver quality public services. These two complementary policies form the two flanks of the new social contract driven by global economic rationalism as advanced in the SDGs. They can strengthen the link between citizens and the State, enhance accountability and reinforce the social contract. However, to assess the extent to which the SDG-based social contract and the financing for development compact have been implemented, it is necessary to consider the following factors that characterize Arab countries' public finances.

2. *Apparent tax disparities giving rise to generic recommendations*

13. Tax efficiency continues to be assessed on the basis of GDP per capita growth, which is not a suitable indicator to measure FfD progress. Equally, the tax to GDP ratio is not best suited to evaluate the efficacy of domestic resource mobilization capacity. Until suitable and uniform indicators are developed, generic assessments based on those indices tend to show large disparities in the average revenue to GDP share between oil-rich, oil-poor, developing and least developed Arab countries. This may give rise to generic non-case sensitive recommendations that argue for higher taxation to mobilize domestic resources.

14. Unlike in developed countries, the structure of the tax base in the Arab region remains far less reliant on income taxes, and more slanted towards corporate income tax (middle-income countries) and trade taxes (least developed countries and conflict-affected economies). More perplexing is that the share of income tax in total tax revenue in oil-poor Arab countries remained stagnant or declined over the period 2005-2014. For oil-rich countries, the revenue-to-GDP share is relatively high, reaching 70 per cent for some, depending on oil wealth. Wealth tax constitutes a negligible share of total tax revenue in most Arab countries.[11]

15. These tax asymmetries reflect the underlying socioeconomic paradoxes that Arab countries contend with when setting optimal tax systems based on recommendations made by the international community, including the following:

- Ensuring tax progressivity in a manner that does not aggravate poverty or raise the tax effort on the lower income deciles: yet, empirical analysis offered by international organizations continues to argue that regressive taxes remain easier to collect and provide quick wins to generate public revenues;

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[10] Unless otherwise indicated, data in the present section are author's calculations undertaken for a forthcoming ESCWA report on the State of Financing Development in the Arab Region (E/ESCWA/EDID/2018/TP.2).

[11] Najib Saab and Abdul-Karim Sadik, eds., *2018 Report of the Arab Forum for Environment and Development: Financing Sustainable Development in Arab Countries* (Beirut, Arab Forum for Environment and Development, 2018).

- Tax systems in the Arab region mostly rely on indirect taxes, including value added tax (VAT), to raise revenues. However, by design, indirect taxes are regressive and so the burden of taxes tends to be higher on middle- and lower-income groups (the largest sections of the consumer base in Arab countries). A simulation exercise for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries suggests that a 5 per cent VAT rate could generate fiscal revenue of 2 per cent of GCC GDP. Exempting basic food items and products consumed by the poor can reduce, but not eliminate, VAT progressivity. In Egypt, empirical assessments suggest that taxes on goods and services may raise 368 billion Egyptian pounds in the fiscal year 2018-2019;[12]

- Achieving progressivity through income taxes may improve equality but needs to be weighed against the broader socioeconomic conditions of a country. Promoting structural transformation (i.e. moving away from agriculture and low-value added services to high-value manufacturing) by providing needed incentives and tax breaks to prompt such transformation has downsides. These measures erode the tax base, and complicate tax administration and compliance. Moreover, there are limits to what countries can provide as fiscal incentives to achieve such a transformation under multilateral trade and prevalent risk conditions in the region and the apparent competitiveness gap;

- Broadening the tax base while ensuring a certain threshold of corporate tax exemptions and incentives (given the global race to the bottom and proliferation of tax havens) to counter de-investment. Nonetheless, corporate tax exemptions erode the tax base and are predominantly applied with a high degree of discretion; if not applied consistently, they may give rise to a breach in national treatment principles;

- Combating tax avoidance and tax-based illicit financial flows (evasion). This becomes very cumbersome given weak tax collection capacities, growing informality, non-intact stolen asset recovery frameworks, and less than ideal international cooperation conditions to tax undeclared off-shore wealth, multinational profit shifting practices and trade-based money laundering.

16. In Lebanon, for instance, income is highly concentrated at the top end, with 0.01 per cent of the income distribution accounting for over 3 per cent of the total income.[13] The scheduler form of the Lebanese personal income tax and the complexity of the tax laws tend to disproportionately benefit the rich, partly because they leave room for tax evasion at the top. Furthermore, estimates indicate that the difference between pre- and post-tax income narrows when moving up the income distribution, with the difference being almost non-existent at the top end (tax evasion amounted to $5 billion in 2017 or 10 per cent of Lebanon's GDP, $2 billion of which is tied to income tax, including $1 billion in uncollected taxes on profits; $1.5 billion related to VAT evasion; $0.5 billion to custom duties; $0.7 billion to corruption, namely linked to unpaid electricity services; and $0.2 billion in property tax evasion).[14]

3. *Volatile and unpredictable resource-based revenues*

17. Oil-rich Arab countries influence oil prices in as much as they are vulnerable to international oil price changes. Yet, oil prices continue to be set against global political and growth considerations in places outside the region. The economic growth of oil-rich countries shadows oil price fluctuations. Under such conditions, the prospects of harnessing revenues from oil sources remain bleak, and while a rise in oil prices may benefit

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[12] According to data from the Ministry of Finance of Egypt, available at http://www.mof.gov.eg/MOF/GallerySource/Arabic/budget2018-2019/Financial-Statement-2018-2019.pdf.

[13] Lydia Assouad, "Top incomes and personal taxation in Lebanon, an exploration of individual tax records 2005-2012", Masters Thesis, Paris School of Economics, 2015.

[14] Audi Bank, "A lackluster real sector activity yet coupled with persistently sound financial and monetary conditions", Lebanon Economic Report, Second Quarter 2018. Available at http://www.bankaudigroup.com/GroupWebsite/openAudiFile1.aspx?id=3889.

these countries, it adversely affects oil-importing economies. For the latter, lower oil prices may help to reduce external and fiscal vulnerabilities, but the benefits from reduced oil import bills are partially offset by declining non-oil commodity export prices in oil-poor Arab countries.

4. *Taxation under the influence of the shadow economy*

18. Raising income tax revenue is negatively correlated to the size of the shadow economy. Generic recommendations advocating tax reforms in the Arab region should be assessed carefully as they may discourage labour supply and savings, and induce greater incentives to evade taxes and push more activity into the informal sector, making the fight against illicit financial flows more difficult. Considerable revenue potentials can be reaped by eliminating those flows.

5. *Corporate tax leakages and base erosion*

19. Taxation influences the behaviour of multinational enterprises and tax evasion. The treatment of base erosion and profit shifting practices therefore remains a priority to enhance domestic resource mobilization potentials. Profit shifting, aggressive tax planning and tax-treaty shopping allow multinational corporations to avoid paying corporate income tax in countries where they do business.

20. Corporate tax exemptions/incentives that are regressive in nature adversely impact domestic revenue mobilization efforts, complicate tax administration and may prompt tax avoidance, evasion and rent-seeking behaviour, as well as adversely impacting the business environment. The race to the bottom in terms of global corporate tax continues to erode the capacity of many Arab countries to raise domestic revenues, especially under increased capital mobility conditions and fixed exchange rates.

6. *The inconsistent quartet*

21. Countries are required to factor the intricacies arising from the 'inconsistent quartet', a concept in international economics that describes why fixed currencies, monetary autonomy, free capital mobility and free trade are incompatible. In other words, reducing budget deficits through taxation while applying discretionary interest rates to control for inflation can act as hidden taxes on savers and traders, in the form of higher trade finance costs and rising public debt repayments. This could induce pro-recessionary effects that in turn lower tax revenues for Governments, prompting capital flight under increased capital mobility conditions.

22. Consequently, there is a need to assess the productivity of taxes associated with broadening the tax base and reducing informality and tax evasion. Only after factoring these variables by bringing more economic activities under the coverage of personal income and corporate tax can an optimal design for a tax policy be developed. Until then, recommendations for the optimal design of tax policy will continue to overlook complications created by the informal economy and tax evasion under the inconsistent quartet. Tax base-broadening may add up to 2 per cent of the region's GDP; however, poor tax records and complex tax procedures render tax compliance and tax fairness analysis weak.

7. *Subnational public revenue generation*

23. Proposals advocating for subnational financing models require thorough reflection as they presume that municipalities and governorates in Arab countries enjoy a minimum threshold of decentralization that allows them to administer own resources and independently tap financial markets to raise capital. Such proposals tend to overlook the fact that these levels of decentralization may not be prevalent in many Arab countries. Implementing some of the recent proposals in this area requires constitutional and statutory reforms. However, such proposals largely overlook the considerations that generally determine the degree of decentralization, especially in conflict-afflicted countries where ensuring territorial authority is of the utmost importance.

24. Fiscal decentralization may shift resources from central Governments that have higher rates of capital spending to regional and local governments that spend relatively more on consumption: there are significant productivity gaps, capital investment gaps and income gaps between urban and rural areas across the region. The result may be detrimental to structural and transformative change. Fiscal decentralization may shift public capital investments because national priorities are unlikely to be the same as those of subnational governments. Decentralizing taxing power is thus likely to increase regional inequality. However, despite these severe problems, there are arguments for assigning some taxes to subnational governments where feasible.

8. *Public revenues and subsidy rationalization*

25. Proposals to phase out water subsidies hold considerable socioeconomic implications for the Arab region. Rationalizing subsidies could offer a more suitable and measurable alternative to ensure that SDGs 1 and 2 are achieved. Many tax systems attempt to mitigate the regressive nature of VAT (through multiple rates, the exclusion of goods and services from the tax base and/or a combination of both). However, these interventions overlook the fact that they do not necessarily differentiate between taxpayers to improve the provision or targeting of services to benefit lower-income deciles. Rather, these measures are equivalent to a generalized subsidy that mostly favours the richest segments of society at a high cost to public finances.

26. Pricing water, air pollution and carbon emissions poses a critical concern, as such measures could adversely affect competitiveness and structural transformation in Arab countries, and may negatively impact multilateral trade. In contrast, providing incentives to invest in green transformation-related projects increases access to clean and affordable energy. For example, greenfield projects have been engines for foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows in the region, as reported by the *2018 World Investment Report*.[15] However, there are limits to the value and type of incentives that can be provided without impinging on the multilateral trade rule-book.

9. *Effective and efficient public expenditures/investments*

27. Improvements in public investment management and expenditure could significantly enhance the efficiency and productivity of public investment. Based on the International Monetary Fund's Public Investment Management Assessments,[16] strengthening key institutions that shape the planning, allocation, procurement and implementation of public investments by making them more predictable, credible, efficient and productive could close two thirds of the public investment efficiency gap in selected Arab countries.

B. Domestic and international private finance

28. The high levels of inequality and declining levels of private investment in the Arab region are a stark reminder of the inability to sufficiently align both domestic and international private investment with long-term sustainable development needs. There is ample room to realign the region's economic and financial policies with the 2030 Agenda. The conclusions and recommendations adopted at the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up propose ways to incentivize institutional investors to take long-term approaches while considering public interests. In this regard, it is worth highlighting several considerations associated with these approaches that affect the major channels of domestic and international private financial flows to the region.

1. *Foreign direct investment and repatriated profits*

29. Following the global economic downturn and political change in the region, FDI inflows decreased from $88.5 billion in 2008 to $32.4 billion and $28.7 billion in 2016 and 2017, respectively. Inflows into the region

[15] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *World Investment Report 2018: Investment and New Industrial Policies* (Geneva, 2018).

[16] See https://www.imf.org/external/np/fad/publicinvestment/#3 for details on the methodology and reports.

remain volatile because of the risks associated with the commodity bust and the deteriorating terms of trade, especially for crude oil, metals and minerals. To achieve the SDGs in the region, inflows must exceed outflows in a sustainable manner, which is not currently the case: the region witnesses FDI inflows, portfolio investments and other official flows of $44 billion annually, but outflows and repatriated profits average $70 billion per year.

30. Moreover, when primary income is factored, the region appears to have witnessed outflows on FDIs and has effectively become a net exporter of capital, as, for every dollar received as FDI, approximately $1.8 dollars is reinvested abroad.

2. *International and Arab migrant remittances*

31. Traditionally, the Arab region has been both a source of and destination for migrant remittances. Arab migrant remittances have steadily increased in three directions. First, interregional cross-border remittance inflows reached $21.4 billion in 2016, representing 5 per cent of total remittances sent to developing countries. Secondly, intraregional remittances rose to $27.1 billion in 2016. Thirdly, extraregional remittance outflows – sent by all foreign nationals residing in the region to their home countries of origin or to third country nationals in non-Arab countries – decreased from $60.4 billion to $54.3 billion in 2011 and 2016, respectively. These patterns suggest that the Arab region remains a net remittance exporter. Between 2011 and 2016, for every $1 of remittances generated, the Arab region repatriated on average $2.8 dollars to other regions.

32. The influence of remittances on output growth is debatable. Considerable disparities exist with respect to the remittances-growth correlation, with Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman and the Sudan showing positive but varying results. Nevertheless, the role of remittances in reducing poverty and improving investment in education and health, and the resulting long-term effects on economic growth, cannot be ignored.

33. The cost of repatriating remittances in the Arab region remains a structural problem and accounts for large development finance leakages. Had remittance costs been reduced as mandated by both the Action Agenda and SDG 10 to ensure that financial services were more affordable to migrants, the Arab region would have saved up to $16 billion worth of additional development finance by 2030.

3. *Public and private partnerships*

34. Compared with other regions, the Arab region performs poorly in mobilizing private capital for financing larger infrastructure projects. Of a world total of $2.5 trillion in 2014, private participation in infrastructure in the Arab region reached $113.5 billion – less than 5 per cent of global public-private partnership (PPP) activity.[17] The region is showing a recovery trend for infrastructure PPP, with a relatively larger share of greenfield projects. However, those projects have been successful in only a handful of countries. Arab countries with the largest private participation in public projects are Morocco (with a 28 per cent share of the region's PPP activities), followed by Egypt at 23 per cent, Algeria at 13 per cent, Iraq and Jordan at 9 per cent, and Tunisia at 6 per cent.

35. The main challenges that hamper the spread of PPPs are categorized as political, regulatory and institutional in addition to capacity, funding and public opinion-related issues. The following four considerations should be highlighted:

- Public policies remain at the heart of implementing FfD priorities. While public and private finance play important roles in financing sustainable development, public leadership is vital for setting rules and overcoming structural constraints that impede structural transformation towards sustainable development. In many areas, particularly those with public good characteristics, public financing remains indispensable. Yet, the 2018 IATF report claims that private funds could ease fiscal space

[17] ESCWA, Background paper for the 2018 Report of the Arab Forum for Environment and Development (unpublished).

to achieve sustainable development. While this may be true for revenue generating projects, it does not necessarily apply to public goods and projects unless they are for a philanthropic cause. The paradox lies in acknowledging that the necessary safeguards need to be in place to ensure the fiscal sustainability of public projects in a manner that preserves public interests, while guaranteeing access to private returns on investments;

- More than 150 international civil society organizations launched a PPP global campaign, expressing alarm at the use of PPPs to deliver public goods, and in particular at the World Bank's role in promoting such contracts. The organizations called for an independent review into the development outcomes of the PPP portfolio. They further indicated that where the public sector is a financial or tax incentivising agent, or provides other regulatory or contractual concessions to the private sector, there are less standards applied on robust transparency, accountability and impact assessment;[18]

- These positions broadly resonate with the Arab unified FfD position, according to which, although there is a need to mobilize both public and private finance to achieve the sustainable development goals, private finance is not a perfect substitute for public finance, especially when delivering on vital public infrastructure.[19] In fact, international private capital has been flowing out of the Arab region, which has become a net exporter of both capital and primary income;

- Offering incentives to the private sector to adopt global standards on responsible business conduct can promote a better alignment of public and private goals. The IATF recognizes the need to improve the definitions, standards, measurement and disclosure of environmental, social and governance impacts and of new instruments. Given the proliferation of competing reporting guidelines for businesses, there is a need to introduce greater standardization in sustainability metrics, and to ensure that the metrics are aligned with global standards so as not to duplicate efforts.

C. International development cooperation

36. International public finance is increasing, but significant SDG funding gaps remain. ODA providers should increase aid and meet the 0.7 per cent gross national income (GNI) target expressed in the Action Agenda. Multilateral development banks and South-South cooperation providers are increasing their contributions to implement the 2030 Agenda, but such forms of international collaboration only complement (rather than substitute) ODA commitments. The international community should support country efforts to manage transitions and reconsider graduation status.

37. There is also a need to recognize that ODA is becoming increasingly non-concessional and is redirected away from its initial intended usages to serve humanitarian action, cover the cost of hosting refugees in donor countries, and cover the costs associated with debt relief frameworks. This is gradually establishing new norms by changing the definition of ODA and the manner in which commitments are reported. Reporting should be sufficiently disaggregated to determine if any increases are attributed to humanitarian spending and in-donor refugee costs, and to assess the level of concessionality of disbursed ODA, including the portion directed through multilateral development banks.

D. International trade as an engine for growth

38. The 2018 IATF report stresses reinforcing trade policies to finance sustainable growth. However, it makes no reference to the Doha Development Round, although it is mentioned in the Action Agenda as a key

[18] Civil Society Financing for Development (FfD) Group, "Collective input by the Civil Society FfD Group, including the Women's Working Group on FfD, in preparation for the 2018 IATF Report on FfD". Available at https://developmentfinance.un.org/sites/developmentfinance.un.org/files/IATF%202018_CS%20FfD%20Group_input_0.pdf.

[19] E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.2/9/Report.

way to turn international trade into an engine for growth. Trade has not been reviewed against the relevant Action Agenda commitments, raising concerns over selectivity when analysing trade and trade-related measures. For example, the IATF reviewed progress in removing agricultural export subsidies, but avoided examining the effects of introducing disciplines and other export restrictions on agriculture.

39. Labour conditions, the empowerment of women and environmental sustainability in bilateral and regional free trade agreements should not be used as new forms of non-tariff barriers. The IATF calls for an open dialogue over environmental and social principles to be included in new trade agreements. In this context, further precision is required to qualify the purpose and format of the proposed dialogue as it remains bilateral/regional and non-preferential in nature, and falls within the scope of free trade agreements concluded as an exception to the general rules governing the multilateral trading system (either on the basis of article XXIV of GATT or the Enabling Clause), unless a new mandate is issued by the World Trade Organization (WTO) through the Negotiating Group on Rules. Reference to those proposed dialogues should be qualified, especially in relation to environmental and social principles over which the WTO does not necessarily have an exclusive mandate.

40. There is a tendency to downplay the effects of trade protectionism, while overemphasizing those that stem from non-binding trade facilitation measures. In doing so, the 2018 IATF report illustrates that the trade coverage of import-facilitating measures ($169 billion) has outpaced (more than double) the value of import-restricting measures ($79 billion). However, this narrative does not necessarily imply that all developing countries are better off. In the Arab region, a substantial share of exports is exposed to trade protectionism, entry prices and tariff-rate quotas, and is subject to deteriorating terms of trade. There is a need to qualify such assessments based on preferential trade product coverage, rather than employ aggregate trade values indistinctly from the nature of preferential arrangements regulating trade between Arab countries and their developed counterparts. The accumulation of post-crisis trade and investment protectionism are further distorting the trade-growth nexus. Nearly 1,500 trade restrictive measures have been adopted, with more than 1,000 imposed by developed economies. Only 25 per cent of such restrictive measures in place since the 2008 financial crisis have been removed.[20]

E. Debt and debt sustainability

41. The IATF finds that debt risks are rising, increasing the possibility of a renewed cycle of debt crises and economic disruption. Countries face pressing demands for additional public investments in the SDGs at a time when constraints on further debt financing are likely to become more binding. The changing composition of debt in developing countries calls for a re-examination of creditor coordination mechanisms. Egypt and Iraq, for example, abandoned plans to issue sovereign bonds owing to prohibitive interest rates sought by investors. The prospects for tighter global liquidity associated with a normalization of United States interest rates and a weaker growth outlook could raise the cost of market-based issuances. These conditions exacerbate the challenges facing the Arab region and may lead to a growth in sovereign borrowing spreads. According to the Global Sovereign Indebtedness Monitor, six Arab countries are vulnerable and likely to witness renewed debt distress/crises.

42. In Lebanon, government debt rose to 153 per cent of GDP, the third highest globally after Japan and Greece. Debt servicing costs consume 44 per cent of government revenues.[21] As the cost of issuing debt goes up, public finances become more unsustainable. The yield on dollar-denominated Lebanese bonds jumped to

[20] Roberto Azevêdo, "A healthy trading system requires progress and engagement at all levels", statement to the Inter-Pacific Bar Association, Kuala Lumpur, 14 April 2016. Available at https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/spra_e/spra119_e.htm.

[21] International Monetary Fund, "IMF Executive Board Concludes Article IV Consultation with Lebanon", Press Release, No. 18/250 (Washington, D.C., 2018). Available at https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2018/06/21/pr18250-imf-executive-board-concludes-article-iv-consultation-with-lebanon.

10.3 per cent in 2018, thus increasing the spread on the country's dollar bonds above those registered in Argentina, Turkey and Ukraine. The cost of insuring Lebanon's debt also rose.[22]

43. ESCWA has proposed a three-pronged strategy to ensure that debt remains a viable means of sustainably financing the region's development. The strategy entails a strong component of multilateral debt relief to aid countries facing a sovereign debt distress; a structural and deleveraging component for non-oil-rich Arab countries based on growth, raising consumption and a return to normal interest rates/inflation; and a balance sheet deleveraging component to avoid the crowding out of the private sector, underinvestment and tightening liquidity through debt repayment, asset purchases and restructuring private debt, and to overcome derisking practices that have obliged Arab banks to curtail correspondent banking relationships with foreign banks, thereby hindering access to capital markets.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

44. Over the past year, the ESCWA secretariat has undertaken various activities on FfD issues within and beyond its regular work programme. Such activities revolved around the three key functions of ESCWA to ensure that ESCWA normative work supported member States through advisory services, to build regional consensus on key challenges facing Arab countries, and to promote the interests of the region at the global level.

A. CONSENSUS-BUILDING AND ADVOCACY

45. Consensus-building and advocacy work centred on making proposals and providing analyses to safeguard Arab financing for development interests at the global and regional levels, including the following:

- Providing extensive inputs to United Nations thinking on FfD. This included the recently launched Secretary-General's Strategy for Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2018-2021) and the work of the IATF;

- Contributing to three high-level panels on the following themes: "Fostering an enabling environment to finance the 2030 Agenda", "Mobilizing private investments for sustainable development" and "Innovative solutions to finance the SDGs" at the Secretary-General's High-Level Meeting on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (New York, 24 September 2018); and to the UNCTAD-led World Investment Forum (Geneva, 22-26 October 2018);

- Providing inputs for the preparation of key global United Nations events, such as the 2019 High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development; and the 2018 ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum and the regional commissions side event on financing for development (New York, 23-28 April 2018);

- Providing a background note for the special session on FfD at the twenty-fourth meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (Cairo, 22 October 2018);

- Contributing to the regional high-level expert workshop on illicit financial flows (Cairo, 27 November 2017);

- Contributing to key regional events such as the Arab Investment Conference (Abu Dhabi, 8-11 April 2018).

[22] Ibid.

B. Normative work

46. Normative work undertaken in the past year on FfD included the following publications, policy reports, background papers and analytical briefs:

- Publishing the first edition of the ESCWA report on the state of financing development in the Arab region (forthcoming);
- Preparing the Arab Financing for Development Scorecard;
- Publishing the Report on Illicit Financial Flows in the Arab Region (E/ESCWA/EDID/2018/TP.1);
- Publishing a policy brief entitled "Global financing for development dynamics and their implications on the Arab region" (E/ESCWA/EDID/2018/TP.5);
- Contributing to the ESCWA Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region 2018 (forthcoming);
- Preparing a concept note entitled "Development and dissemination of financing for development media content";
- Drafting a concept note on FfD for the 2018 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (Beirut, 24-26 April 2018);
- Contributing to the preparation of the Secretary-General's report entitled "Trends and progress in international development cooperation" (E/2018/55);
- Preparing a chapter on financing development in the Arab Forum for Environment and Development 2018 Report (forthcoming);
- Preparing an assessment of the 2018 IATF report for the G77 and China.

C. Technical cooperation and advisory services

47. The ESCWA secretariat undertook the following three major technical cooperation and advisory services in the area of FfD in 2018.

- Organizing a national workshop on the theme "Fiscal policy and taxation, the multilateral agreement and inclusive tax framework" (Manama, 23-26 April 2018);
- Organizing the Conference on Financing Sustainable Development – Curbing Illicit Financial Flows, upon a request by the Chairman of the G77 and China (Beirut, 28-29 November 2018).

48. Representatives of member States are invited to take note of the key messages and findings contained in the present document and of the activities undertaken to support of FfD at the regional level, and to provide guidance for ESCWA future work in this important area, especially since regional commissions are assuming greater roles to advance the Action Agenda as part of reforming the United Nations Development System.

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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Arab Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data: progress in implementation

Summary

At its twelfth session held in Beirut on 4 and 5 April 2017, the Statistical Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) adopted the Arab Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data. The Arab Regional Action Plan was based on the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, which was adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its forty-eighth session.

The present document provides the status of implementation of the Arab Regional Action Plan. The Executive Committee may wish to take note of the contents of the document and of the efforts undertaken by the ESCWA secretariat to support member States in building their statistical capacity to monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Introduction

1. At its twelfth session held in Beirut on 4 and 5 April 2017, the Statistical Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) adopted the Arab Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data,[1] which was formulated around the six strategic areas delineated in the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data:[2]

Strategic area 1:	Coordination and strategic leadership on data for sustainable development
Strategic area 2:	Innovation and modernization of national statistical systems
Strategic area 3:	Strengthen basic statistical activities and programmes, with particular focus on addressing the monitoring needs of the 2030 Agenda
Strategic area 4:	Dissemination and use of sustainable development data
Strategic area 5:	Multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development data
Strategic area 6:	Mobilize resources and coordinate efforts for statistical capacity-building

2. In the regional plan, the objectives and proposed implementation actions were adapted to regional priorities, and to mandates by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Indeed, General Assembly resolution 71/313 recommended that national statistical systems explore ways to integrate new data sources into their systems to satisfy new data needs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; that all activities of the global statistical system be conducted in full adherence to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics 2; and that regional commissions intensify their support for strengthening data collection and statistical capacity-building, including capacity-building that strengthens coordination among national statistical offices, in line with previous resolutions on the subject, including resolutions 69/313 and 68/261. In turn, Economic and Social Council Resolution 2006/6 called upon Member States to intensify their efforts to strengthen national statistical capacity in order to produce reliable and timely statistics and indicators for the monitoring of national development policies and strategies, and of the implementation of commitments and the achievement of all development goals at the national, regional and international levels.

STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARAB REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DATA

Strategic area 1. Coordination and strategic leadership on data for sustainable development

1.1 *Strengthen inter-agency coordination in the region*

3. A number of regional and global actors in official statistics are active in the Arab region. In November 2017, the United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism for the Arab States established the Task Force on Sustainable Development Goals Data.[3] The Task Force, co-chaired by the regional office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and ESCWA, comprises the League of Arab States and United Nations agencies that have a significant statistical component in their mandates and work programmes.

4. The Task Force held its second meeting in Beirut, on 27 and 28 June 2018. Discussions focused on the requirements of national, regional and global reporting processes on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators. Participants emphasized the importance of minimizing the burden on already over-stretched national statistical systems through identifying core sets of data, so as to set a data-sharing platform and engage

[1] E/ESCWA/SD/2017/IG.1/4(Part II).

[2] See Annex I of the background document presented to the forty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission, available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/48th-session/documents/BG-2017-3a-HLG-E.pdf.

[3] See https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/u522/workplan_sdg_data_tf_0.pdf.

in capacity development and technical cooperation. On the regional level, members of the Task Force also agreed on the need to identify a regional core set of data that reflects the regional strategic direction and ensures proper SDG monitoring. This process should take into consideration regional data flows, data gaps, and the role of United Nations country teams in providing statistics and data. Task Force members underlined that existing frameworks, such as lead indicators of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), could be helpful to formulate SDG data strategies. The Task Force will work on the formulation of a regional strategy on statistics and data for the SDGs, to be finalized in 2019.

5. The Task Force also agreed to undertake and regularly update the inventory of completed, ongoing and planned statistical activities from 2016 onwards. The inventory would serve as a main regional coordination tool for statistical activities, and would also feature a mapping of the status of regional data flows.

1.2 *Establish links between inter-agency and intergovernmental coordination*

6. Members of the Task Force on Sustainable Development Goals Data recommended that the ESCWA Statistical Committee act as the leader of intergovernmental coordination for SGD statistics and data in the Arab region. The Statistical Committee will continue to be the platform for such coordination while ensuring the involvement of Task Force members.

Strategic area 2. Innovation and modernization of national statistical systems

2.1 *National and regional strategies for development of statistics*

7. ESCWA has cooperated with the Partnership for Statistics in the 21st Century (PARIS21) in undertaking assessments of the readiness of national statistical systems in interested countries. The objective was to support the implementation of the SDGs through the provision of reliable, relevant and timely statistics and data. In Egypt and Jordan, the assessments resulted in the formulation of national strategies for development of statistics (NSDS). ESCWA has also contributed to PARIS21 *NSDS Guidelines*, namely to the chapter on "fragile States".[4]

2.2 *Data sharing*

8. Approval of the principles of SDG data flows by the United Nations Statistical Commission has been postponed to March 2019. Nevertheless, the ESCWA secretariat has formulated a vision for regional data flows that respect national sourcing of data, considering the role of national statistical offices and of custodian agencies as defined in the Cape Town Global Action Plan. The vision will have to be adjusted to the global principles upon their adoption, but the ESCWA secretariat has considered that it was important to initiate the dialogue. It presented its vision proposal at a meeting on the Arab Development Portal, which was convened by the United Nations Development Programme in Beirut, on 23 April 2018, and at the above-mentioned June 2018 meeting of the Task Force on Sustainable Development Goals Data.

2.3 *Geospatial information*

9. The ESCWA secretariat brought the issue of integration of geospatial and statistical information to the Consultative Meeting on the Implementation Framework for the Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab Region, held in Cairo from 18 to 20 September 2017. Prior to the meeting, ESCWA had undertaken a survey on the use of geospatial information in member States. A second round of the survey was launched in 2018, with a view to refining the information based on the recommendations of the Consultative Meeting.

[4] PARIS21, *NSDS Guidelines: Guidelines for the Elaboration of a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics* (April 2018). Available at http://nsdsguidelines.paris21.org/NSDS-GUIDELINES-full-lang-en.pdf.

10. In order to build partnerships on geospatial information, the ESCWA secretariat became a participant organization in the Group on Earth Observations (GEO),[5] similarly to other United Nations regional commissions. ESCWA is also acting as secretariat and facilitator of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management for Arab States.[6]

2.4 *Transformative agenda for official statistics*

11. As part of the efforts of its efforts to seek new data sources that would complement censuses and classical statistical surveys, and in order to respond to the increased data demand brought by the 2030 Agenda, ESCWA has established a big data team within the secretariat. The first phase of its work aims at building internal capacity in new data sources for official statistics and other data-related areas. The team has started collecting and analysing information on activities in other regions and within global initiatives, and has launched a series of seminars for ESCWA staff.

Strategic area 3. Strengthen basic statistical activities and programmes, with particular focus on addressing the monitoring needs of the 2030 Agenda

3.1 *Economic statistics*

12. The ESCWA secretariat continues to support national statistical systems in the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts. In this context, it has initiated work on reflecting Islamic finance in national accounts. Inspired by that effort, the United Nations Statistics Division has established a global task force on Islamic finance in 2017. A proposal for a standardized approach of the subject was discussed at a workshop held by ESCWA in Beirut, in August 2018. The ESCWA secretariat has also contributed to a workshop on Islamic finance organized by the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), which was held in October 2018 in Ankara.

13. The ESCWA secretariat has facilitated regional efforts towards the establishment of statistical business registers. In that context, it completed a project under the ninth tranche of the United Nations Development Account on short-term economic indicators in December 2017.[7] The project focused on capacity development for the production of quarterly indicators in sectoral economic statistics, including the creation of an information technology tool for intra-annual indicators.

14. In the area of price indices, the ESCWA secretariat has completed the annual collection of data for the International Comparison Programme, in cooperation with national statistical offices. This effort allows for the calculation of national purchasing power parities on the basis of real data rather than through extrapolation and retropolation. Participating countries were able to produce comparable subnational purchasing power parities. Work on price statistics also includes efforts towards the adoption of a harmonized consumer price index and towards harmonizing data collection for temporal (consumer price indices) and spatial (purchasing power parities) price indices.

15. In the area of sectoral economic statistics, the ESCWA secretariat has established a regional dashboard on trade statistics, which has been included by United Nations Headquarters in Comtrade Labs.[8]

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[5] The Group on Earth Observations (GEO) is an intergovernmental organization working to improve the availability, access and use of Earth observations for the benefit of society. For more information, see http://earthobservations.org/index2.php.

[6] See http://www.un-ggim-as.org.

[7] The United Nations Development Account was established by the General Assembly as a mechanism to fund capacity development projects of the economic and social entities of the United Nations. It provides a bridge between in-country capacity development actors and United Nations Secretariat entities.

[8] See https://comtrade.un.org/labs.

3.2 *Demographic and social statistics*

16. The ESCWA secretariat has pursued its efforts in demographic and social statistics. In 2017 and 2018, it undertook assessment and advisory missions to several member States in the context of such work. In 2017, it organized an expert group meeting on record linkage to assess completeness of death registration (Beirut, 21-27 September) and a regional workshop on quality evaluation of civil registration and vital statistics in the Arab States (Beirut, 9-10 October). In 2018, it held a regional training workshop for developing vital statistics reports from civil registration (Beirut, 10-11 October). Participants in these events called for the establishment of a coordination mechanism between relevant international and regional organizations to implement additional capacity development activities. Further work in civil registration and vital statistics would require additional resource mobilization.

17. In 2018, ESCWA issued the Regional Guidebook to Improve Disability Data Collection and Analysis in the Arab Countries: Implementing the Washington Group Questions on Functioning,[9] which was prepared in cooperation with regional statisticians and policymakers and members of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics. This Guidebook was referred to as a leading practice at the Second United Nations World Data Forum held in Dubai, from 22 to 24 October 2018. The Guidebook and related capacity development activities resulted in increased availability of data on persons with disabilities. The ESCWA secretariat has also developed, in cooperation with the League of Arab States, an Arab framework for disability statistics of around 100 indicators,[10] which links the SDGs with the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It was adopted at the Inter-agency and Expert Group Meeting on Improving Disability Statistics in the Sustainable Development Goals, held in Cairo from 18 to 20 September 2018.

18. The informal Arab Group on Population and Housing Censuses has been actively engaged in discussions on challenges in using technology in censuses, and the integration of the geospatial dimension into censuses. In 2017 and 2018, it has held several meetings and workshops and facilitated transfer of experience in that area, leading to improvement in the quality of data, as electronic questionnaires allow validation of data at the time of collection.

19. In support of SDG 5, the ESCWA secretariat has updated the regional questionnaire on statistics on violence against women (VAW), based on the latest revisions by the World Health Organization which included additional SDG indicators on VAW. The ESCWA secretariat is also developing a handbook on SDG 5-related statistics to assist countries in the collection and compilation of accurate and comparable data, based on examples of good practice from selected countries, which will be presented at the November 2018 Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics meeting in Tokyo.

3.3 *Environment statistics*

20. During the above-mentioned Consultative Meeting on the Implementation Framework for the Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab Region, held in Cairo from 18 to 20 September 2017, the ESCWA secretariat advocated the implementation of the System of Environment Economic Accounting.

21. In addition, the ESCWA secretariat published a special issue of the Compendium of Environment Statistics in the Arab Region, entitled *Climate Change-related Statistics in the Arab Region: A Proposed Set of Indicators*,[11] focused on data and methodologies applicable to the Arab region.

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[9] E/ESCWA/SD/2018/MANUAL.1.

[10] E/ESCWA/SD/2018/WG.1/7. The framework was adopted at the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Improving Disability Statistics in the Sustainable Development Goals, Cairo, 18-20 September 2018.

[11] E/ESCWA/SD/2017/3.

Strategic area 4. Dissemination and use of sustainable development data

4.1 *Modernizing data dissemination and communication*

22. Over the past four years, the ESCWA secretariat has worked on establishing a new statistical information system. The resulting data portal is intended to make available a wide variety of statistics and data on sustainable development. Its core consists of a data management module (DMM) comprising the data warehouse, data transformation tools, an analytical tool and a reporting tool.

23. A data dissemination module (DDM) was implemented in 2017 and 2018, to serve external users and data dissemination. The DDM allows ESCWA to create and customize dashboards by statistical subject matter, and to combine data from different areas of statistics, such as combining economic and social statistics in cross-tabulating gross domestic product (GDP) and health data, or GDP and education data, or industrial output and household income data, into a single dashboard. DDM users will be able to download data, store analysis results and create custom-made dashboards for their own use.

4.2 *Statistical literacy*

24. A regional workshop on sound institutional environment, cooperation, dialogue and partnerships for the production and utilization of SDG indicators was held in Tunis, from 6 to 8 February 2018. It brought together senior statisticians, including heads of national statistical offices, with policymakers from ministries of planning and of the economy, and highlighted best practice in adjusting the institutional environment of official statistics to the needs of the 2030 Agenda. The workshop resulted in recommendations on implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

25. The ESCWA secretariat has obtained funding under the United Nations Development Account for further improvement of statistical glossaries. The project aims at establishing a standard Arabic language terminology for statistical terms, which will be proposed for adoption by the ESCWA Statistical Committee. This would contribute to resolve concerns about the variable quality of translation of statistical terminology.

26. In addition, ESCWA has completed the translation of Tier I and Tier II SDG indicators, including their metadata, according to the Tier Classification by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators.

Strategic area 5. Multi-stakeholder partnership for sustainable development data

5.1 *Regional partnership*

27. The ESCWA secretariat is pursuing various partnerships to strengthen regional capacity for sustainable development data. In the framework of the Task Force on Sustainable Development Goals Data, the secretariat has partnered with United Nations agencies participating in the Regional Coordination Mechanism, the League of Arab States and its specialized agencies, the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS), SESRIC, the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC-Stat) and others.

5.2 *Promote national partnership*

28. The ESCWA secretariat has continued to strengthen the links between policymakers and national statistical offices by extending invitations to the former to workshops, seminars, meetings and other events.

Strategic area 6. Mobilize resources and coordinate efforts for statistical capacity-building

6.1 *Inter-agency partnership*

29. ESCWA succeeded to partially outset a lack of resources for statistical capacity-building by partnering with other regional statistical agencies. For example, in 2016 and 2017, more than 30 events were co-organized

with the League of Arab States, AITRS, SESRIC, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and other partners.

6.2 *United Nations development programmes*

30. ESCWA is one of the implementing agencies of the Statistics and Data Programme under the tenth tranche of the United Nations Development Account. The Programme consists of four pillars including means of implementation, demographic and social statistics, economic statistics and environment statistics.

6.3 *Partnership with funds and development banks*

31. ESCWA has obtained a grant from the World Bank in support of price statistics and other areas of economic statistics. ESCWA and the World Bank plan to approach together potential regional donors to secure sustainability of funding for the related programmes.

32. The Executive Committee may wish to take note of the implementation of this Plan and the efforts undertaken by the secretariat to support member States in building their statistical capacity to monitor the implementation of the SDGs.

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Palestinian economy under the occupation: the case of the industrial sector

Summary

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) continues to monitor Israeli practices and policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory and their economic and social impact on the Palestinian people, pursuant to ESCWA resolutions, in particular 326 (XXIX) and 330 (XXX). As part of those efforts, the present document examines the Palestinian economy under the occupation, addressing the constraints imposed on it by Israeli policies since 1967 and providing, through a set of macroeconomic indicators, an overview of its current state. It then places focus on the industrial sector due to its significant potential to drive economic and social development in Palestine, a potential however thwarted by the Israeli occupation and related policies.

Members of the Executive Committee are invited to take note of the present document and express their opinion on its content.

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) continues to monitor Israeli policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory and their economic and social impact on the Palestinian people. Resolutions adopted at ESCWA ministerial sessions, in particular 326 (XXIX) and 330 (XXX), had indeed requested the secretariat to document and analyse the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people and their society, economy and infrastructure and for the economic and social development of current and future generations; and to monitor Israeli violations of the rights of the Palestinian people and of international law and present periodic reports to the Commission in that regard.

2. In its report to the thirtieth ESCWA ministerial session,[1] the secretariat provided a snapshot of Israeli policies and practices which form part of a three-fold strategy of land grab, displacement of Palestinians and oppression of any resistance thereto.

3. In a continuation of monitoring efforts, the present document examines the Palestinian economy under the occupation, reviewing Israeli policies and practices that have rendered it dependent upon the Israeli economy. The document highlights the severe constraints imposed by Israeli policies since 1967 and provides, through a set of macroeconomic indicators, an overview of the current state of the Palestinian economy. It then takes the industrial sector in focus as it holds significant potential to drive social and economic development in the occupied Palestinian territory, and shows how such potential is thwarted by a series of constraints stemming from the occupation and related policies.

I. ISRAELI POLICIES TOWARDS THE PALESTINIAN ECONOMY

4. The occupied Palestinian territory suffers from some of the same economic stagnation and lack of structural transformation experienced across the region, but struggles, in addition, under incomparable constraints imposed on its economy and society due to the Israeli occupation. In examining Israeli measures, both direct and indirect, that blight the Palestinian economy, two time periods may be distinguished. The first extends from 1967 to 1994 when Israel had direct total control over development and economic policies, including decision-making about public finance, trade, employment and other pillars of economic policy. The second period ensued from the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations, which was signed by the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel in 1994 and was meant to give the Palestinians a measure of economic self-determination, albeit subject to the political and economic realities of the occupation, during a five-year transitional period. However, nearly 20 years later, subjugation of the Palestinian economy, in almost all essential aspects, persists.

5. In the first period of total direct control, beginning in 1967, Israel was able to ensure a steady supply of low-wage workers for itself. By 1990, about 35-40 per cent of Palestinian labourers were working in Israel.[2] Limited employment prospects still drive Palestinians to seek employment in Israeli settlements and in Israel;[3] in 2017, 13 per cent 2017 per cent of the total Palestinian labour force worked there, up from 11.7 per cent in 2014.[4] As this employment provides about three times higher wages than in the employment in the occupied

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[1] E/ESCWA/30/5.

[2] Nur Arafeh, "The myth of a 'Palestinian economy'", *Al Jazeera*, 6 July 2017, citing Leila Farsakh, "Palestinian economic development: paradigm shifts since the First Intifada", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 45, No. 2 (Winter 2016). Available at https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/07/myth-palestinian-economy-170706060337109.html.

[3] ITD/B/64/4.

[4] State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), *Palestine in Figures 2017* (Ramallah, March 2018). Available at http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2362.pdf.

Palestinian territory,[5,6] this trend may be difficult to reverse. Indeed, its persistence indicates that Israeli policies seek directly or indirectly to retain the occupied Palestinian territory as a source of inputs, particularly of cheap labour, for the Israeli economy.

6. Moreover, since 1967, Israel has promoted supply and sale of Israeli products to the occupied Palestinian territory.[7] Israel's complete control over routes of export and import, among other constraints render Palestinian external trade strategy, balance and composition quite complex.

7. The occupied Palestinian territory continues to face a unique and difficult situation in the collection of revenues and in public expenditure, which are not only pivotal for setting industrial and economic policy, but also for defining the links between citizen and State.

8. Prior to 1994, the occupied Palestinian territory, which was under direct Israeli military and administrative control, suffered from the stringent austerity imposed by the occupation. A strict fiscal policy did not allow spending to exceed tax revenues and public spending was low. For example, during the period 1987-1991, total expenditure averaged 24 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), compared with an average non-military total expenditure of 37 per cent of GDP in Egypt, 31 per cent in Jordan and 37 per cent in Israel itself.[8] All too restrictive, the fiscal policy that prevailed during the period 1967-1994 limited possible interventions to promote industry and exports, as practiced elsewhere. Limited investment in education, infrastructure and other sectors hampered growth and development.

9. Since 1994, under the Paris Protocol tax revenues system, Israel has been collecting certain taxes "on behalf of the Plalestinians", and transferring them to the Palestinian Authority. These revenues are always at risk of being withheld under various pretexts that are entirely out of Palestinian control and utterly unrelated to fiscal policy. Israel uses this system to exert pressure on the Palestinian Authority, thus restricting the ability of Palestinian institutions to manage development and citizens' affairs.

10. Moreover, Israel uses this system to impose sanctions on political grounds. For example, in July 2018, the Israeli Knesset passed a law mandating deduction from Palestinian tax revenues equivalent to the amounts paid by the Palestinian Government to Palestinian prisoners, their families and the families of martyrs. Not only does this law contravene signed agreements, it also undermines the ability of the Palestinian Government to meet its financial obligations and opens the door to further and broader Israeli intrusions into Palestinian financial, social and economic policy.

11. Moreover, the Israeli blockade of, and frequent Israeli military attacks on, the Gaza Strip place a huge fiscal burden: whereas Gaza contributes less than 10 per cent of government revenues, it accounts for up to 40 per cent of total expenditures.[9]

12. Israeli control over revenues thus constrains the fiscal policymaking capacity of the Palestinian Authority and its ability to induce economic transformation. Through the use of direct economic levers and the indirect impact of mechanisms such as controls on the movement of people and deductions from revenues, the Paris Protocol has ensnared the Palestinian economy and perpetuated Palestinian economic dependence on Israel.

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[5] TD/B/64/4.

[6] Nu'man Kanafani, ed., *Economic Monitor Issue 47 – 2017* (Ramallah, Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Palestine Monetary Authority and Palestine Capital Market Authority, 2017).

[7] Nur Arafeh, "The myth of a 'Palestinian economy'".

[8] TD/B/65(2)/3, p. 12.

[9] Ibid., p. 2.

II. SITUATION OF THE PALESTINIAN ECONOMY: MACROECONOMIC INDICATORS

13. Israeli policies and practices have chocked the Palestinian economy and have directly and indirectly prevented the adoption of strategies for job creation, socioeconomic development and economic transformation. Attaining the right mix of policies, investment and private sector involvement conducive to spurring growth and development is an extraordinarily difficult task, even under normal circumstances. In the case of the occupied Palestinian territory, this task has been rendered near impossible by the lack of political autonomy, regular human rights and security violations, externally imposed economic constraints, and other direct and indirect cumulative impacts of the Israeli occupation.

A. GROWTH

14. Palestinian economic growth appears to be characterized by volatility (figure). Instances of steep growth in economic activity are not engendered by new economic activities, but are rather due to the rebound effects of a cessation of an Israeli military attack or subsequent reconstruction. The World Bank estimates real GDP at constant market prices to have fallen from 3.1 per cent in 2017 to 1.7 per cent in 2018.[10] As for sectoral breakdown of economic activity as measured by value added, agriculture has played a small and decreasing role, with its contribution to GDP declining between 1994 and 2016 from more than 13 per cent to less than 4 per cent, while the contribution of industry fell from more than 30 per cent to less than 20 per cent. During the same period, the contribution of the services sector rose from 50 per cent to more than 60 per cent. A detailed sectoral analysis carried out by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) reveals that the services sector is by far the largest contributor to GDP, followed by wholesale and retail trade, public administration, mining, manufacturing and utilities.[11] In the Gaza Strip, the blockade, restricting as it does the import of essential inputs, stymies growth and economic diversification.

GDP growth, percentage year on year, 1995-2016

Source: ESCWA calculations based on PBCS data.

[10] World Bank, "Palestine's economic outlook – October 2018", 3 October 2018. Available at https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/westbankandgaza/publication/economic-outlook-october-2018.

[11] PCBS, *Palestine in Figures 2017*.

B. Trade

15. The State of Palestine has a large trade deficit in both goods and services that amounted to 37 per cent of GDP in 2017. Over half of this deficit is accounted for by trade with Israel,[12] although a slight trade surplus of trade in services with Israel has existed since 2011.[13] Israel continues to be a source and destination of an overwhelming, though diminishing, proportion of trade flows. From 2014 to 2016, exports to Israel constituted about 84 per cent of all exports, while imports from Israel fell from 70 per cent to 58 per cent of all imports (table 1). Meanwhile, Palestinian trade flows with the other Arab countries remain very small, but are growing slowly, particularly regarding imports.

Table 1. Occupied Palestinian territory exports and imports, 2014-2016

A. Registered export indicators[a]

Value in millions of dollars			
Indicator	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**
Total exports	944	958	926
Total exports by destination			
To Israel	792	804	771
To Arab countries	113	121	119
To other countries	39	33	36
Total distribution of exports			
National exports	689	705	691
Re-exports	255	253	235
Total exports by area			
West Bank	938	954	922
Gaza Strip	6	4	4

[a] Data do not include the part of Jerusalem that was annexed forcefully by Israel following its occupation of the West Bank in 1967.

B. Registered import indicators[a]

Value in millions of dollars			
Indicator	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**
Total imports	5 683	5 225	5 364
Total imports by means of transportation			
By land and postal packages	5 006	4 669	4 726
Through electricity networks and pipes[b]	677	556	638
Total imports by country			
From Israel	3 958	3 045	3 123
From European Union countries	581	612	665
From Arab countries	274	343	320
From American countries	95	115	107
From other countries	775	1 110	1 149
Net trade balance	-4 739	-4 267	-4 438

Source: PCBS data, available at http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/lang__en/507/default.aspx?lang=en (accessed on 29 October 2018).

[a] Data do not include the part of Jerusalem that was annexed forcefully by Israel following its occupation of the West Bank in 1967.

[b] Includes water and electricity.

[12] TD/B/65(2)/3, p. 5.

[13] PCBS, *Palestine in Figures 2017*.

C. Employment

16. Unemployment has remained extremely high due to limited job opportunities. Table 2 shows that it rose in recent years, standing at a particularly devastating rate of 43.9 per cent in the Gaza Strip. More broadly, unemployment has been high and worsening ever since the enforcement of the Paris Protocol and particularly since the second Intifada in 2000.

Table 2. Unemployment
(Percentage)

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Palestine	26.9	25.9	26.9	27.7
West Bank	17.7	17.3	18.2	17.9
Gaza	43.9	41.0	41.7	43.9

Source: PCBS data, available at http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/lang__en/507/default.aspx?lang=en (accessed on 29 October 2018).

17. The services sector has played the largest role in employment, with its share of the total rising slightly from 30 per cent to around 35 per cent from 2000 to 2016.[14] During that period, employment in mining, quarrying and manufacturing remained stagnant, with their share in total employment ranging from 12 per cent to 15 per cent, while the share of agriculture and fishing declined from more than 14 per cent to less than 8 per cent.

D. Revenues

18. Although regular taxation measurement is difficult due to the complexity of the fiscal relationship with Israel, World Bank data shows that tax revenue has stagnated at between 5 and 8 per cent of GDP.[15] In fact, as of 2016, Israel has transferred to the Palestinian Authority 77.7 per cent of the Authority's total tax revenues.[16] The contribution of official development assistance (ODA) to Palestinian government revenues has remained significant, though always hostage to political tensions. Indeed, these contributions have already been reducing, from some $2 billion in 2008 to $720 million as of 2016.[17] While revenues were up in the first half of 2017, there was still a budget deficit of 8.4 per cent of GDP, and, clearly, possible imminent reductions in donor transfers will mount pressure on public finances.[18]

19. In addition, there are fiscal leakages due to both direct and other indirect causes, including control of imports by Israel and limited Palestinian control over exports, as well as issues related to tax collection mechanisms.

III. Palestinian industrial policy

20. The critical importance of industrialization has been evident across the Arab region and in countries of the Global south that underwent successful economic transformation to higher levels of incomes and socioeconomic outcomes. New industries, whether in manufacturing, industrial services or other ventures, are critical to job creation, absorbing labour market entrants, providing stable wages, and producing outputs

[14] International Labour Organization (ILO), *The Occupied Palestinian Territory: An Employment Diagnostic Study* (Geneva, ILO Regional Office for Arab States, 2018).

[15] World Bank, World Development Indicators. Available at https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/world-development-indicators (accessed on 17 September 2018).

[16] Jamil Misyef, *National Trade Policy for Palestine: Analysis of Tariff and Industrial Policy Options* (Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute, Ramallah, 2017).

[17] TD/B/65(2)/3, p. 3.

[18] A/73/87-E/2018/69, p. 16.

initially able to compete with imports and eventually in global export markets. Today, policies aimed at promoting industrialization are ubiquitous across the globe.

21. Of the industrialization and transformation strategies available, one that has great potential involves building higher-value activities linked to available assets, such as commodities, land, human capital or other assets.[19] Such activities are undertaken not through static comparative advantages but rather by harnessing the available assets to build dynamic competitive advantages and foster economic diversification.[20]

22. In this context, natural resource sectors provide a basis for both upstream value-added inputs and downstream processing. Similarly, agro-industry can transform price-volatile raw agricultural outputs into higher-value goods for the local market as well as for export.

A. Industry in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

23. The Palestinian National Policy Agenda identifies sustainable development as one of the three pillars of the hoped future Palestinian State. Within sustainable development, it identifies five national priorities, one of which is economic independence that would be delivered through: building the future economy; creating job opportunities; improving the business environment; and promoting the industry.[21]

24. According to PCBS data, the number of companies engaged in industrial activities rose between 1999 and 2016 from 15,000 to 19,000, and the number of employees in the sector rose from 73,000 to 100,000.[22]

25. Manufacture of food products accounted for the largest proportion of the labour force in productive sectors (17.1 per cent), followed closely by the manufacture of other non-metallic mineral products (16.6 per cent) and the manufacture of furniture (13.3 per cent). In terms of output and value added, differences among industrial activities are more acute, with the production of non-metallic mineral products and food products together being the major contributors. Industry as a whole accounts for 83 per cent of Palestinian exports, notably stone and marble (21 per cent), furniture (12 per cent) and footwear (5 per cent).[23]

26. Palestinian industrial sectors face significant challenges and obstacles. According to the Economic Intelligence Unit of the Economist, industrial production contracted by 3.2 per cent in May 2018 compared with April, and by 5.3 per cent compared with May 2017.[24] The PCBS Industrial Production Index fell from 124.42 to 102.12 between August 2017 and August 2018, driven by falls in water, sewage, waste and manufacturing.[25] Due to its size and potential, manufacturing does hold the largest share of the Index, at 83.19 per cent.

27. Though facing specific constraints and challenges, certain industrial sub-sectors and economic activities have significant potential. Mining, for example, provides 15,000-20,000 jobs, has an output of $250 million

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[19] Isabelle Ramdoo, "Resource-based industrialization in Africa: optimizing linkages and value chains in the extractive sector", Discussion Paper, No. 179 (European Centre for Development Policy Management, Maastricht and Brussels, September 2015).

[20] Albert Hirschman, *Essays in Trespassing: Economics to Politics and Beyond* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981), pp. 59-96.

[21] State of Palestine, *National Policy Agenda 2017-2022: Putting Citizens First* (December 2016). Available at https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/npa_english_final_approved_20_2_2017_printed.pdf.

[22] Data from PCBS on the number of enterprises, persons engaged and main economic indicators in Palestine for industrial activities, 1999-2016. Available at http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_Rainbow/Documents/Num_Enter_Main_1999-2016(E).htm (accessed on 29 October 2018).

[23] Jamil Misyef, *National Trade Policy for Palestine*.

[24] Data from the Economist Intelligence Unit, available at http://country.eiu.com/palestine# (accessed on 11 October 2018).

[25] PCBS, *Palestine in Figures 2017*.

and has accounted for 17 per cent of all exports in 2011.[26] Raw mineral and quarrying outputs play an important role in the Israeli economy. Israeli firms operate intensively in the quarrying sector in the West Bank, owning, according to Israeli data, more than half of the 16 quarries operating in Area C of the West Bank. These quarries transfer 94 per cent of their production to Israel, in addition to 80 per cent of the total output of Palestinian-owned quarries.[27] Moreover, Israel and its settlements also accrue royalties and taxes from quarrying operations, while Israel almost completely refuses to grant permits to Palestinians to develop both existing and new quarrying resources.[28]

28. Food industries also have considerable potential. An oft-examined agricultural activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, olive pressing for oil extraction has achieved slightly increasing output in the period 2013-2016, from 17.6 million metric tons to 20.1 million metric tons, with the number of workers hovering at 1,300.[29] However, small-holder farmers dominate most of the agricultural activity,[30] which may hinder higher value agro-industries that require skills, expertise, technology, investment and economies of scale. As in the case of other countries in the region, and indeed globally, agricultural added value suffers from limited access to credit, technology, information and other inputs. More diversified high-value crops, ranging from flowers to strawberries and cherry tomatoes, are also increasingly in focus.[31] However, due to the constraints imposed by the occupation and other factors, agriculture has declined by 11 per cent in 2017.[32] Limited access to land, restrictions on land use, denial of permits to enhance agricultural methods and techniques, curtailment of movement, and hindered access to inputs and export markets, all of which foisted by deliberate Israel policy, severely limit the ability of the Palestinian agricultural sector to realize its potential and to engage in higher-value agricultural activities.

B. Economic zones and industrial complexes

29. As evidenced by some clear successes and widespread adoption across the globe, industrial parks and special economic zones (SEZs) are an attractive industrialization option. These involve geographic or thematic clustering of industrial activities and support by targeted government interventions and private sector participation. Such zones can succeed in linking small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), establishing job-creating industries and attracting foreign direct investment,[33] with their activities benefiting from a critical mass of related companies operating in proximity and benefiting from knowledge sharing, pooled labour and low transaction and transport costs. However, SEZs require a strong policymaking and implementation environment to shield planned industrial interventions from problems besetting other economic development initiatives. In the case of the occupied Palestinian territory, challenges faced by the quest for expanding the industrial base through economic zones and clusters are compounded by the sever constraints imposed by the occupation.

30. The Palestinian National Policy Agenda provides for rebuilding productive sectors and industrial parks as policy interventions aimed at invigorating the Palestinian economy of the future. Industrial zones operate

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[26] Human Rights Watch, "Occupation, Inc. How settlement businesses contribute to Israel's violations of Palestinian rights", 19 January 2016. Available at https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/01/19/occupation-inc/how-settlement-businesses-contribute-israels-violations-palestinian.

[27] A/73/87-E/2018/69.

[28] Human Rights Watch, "Occupation, Inc."

[29] PCBS, *Palestine in Figures 2017*.

[30] Center for Economic and Policy Research, "Agriculture in Palestine: a post-Oslo analysis", CEPR Memo. Available at https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6170/c6659e55c5ac2cbed8a2b3d20dfb7ea5a0879.pdf.

[31] Ibid.

[32] TD/B/65(2)/3, p. 2.

[33] Dorsati Madani, "A review of the role and impact of export processing zones", Policy Research Working Paper No. 2238 (World Bank, Washington, D.C., 1999).

under the Palestinian Industrial Estates and Free Zones Authority (PIEFZA),[34] in partnership with a number of foreign Governments, development agencies and firms. The focus is on SEZs and export-oriented free economic zones. The following are the official industrial zones as identified by PIEFZA:

- Bethlehem Industrial Estate: aiming to promote SMEs and young entrepreneurs; the donor is the French Government;
- Jericho Agro-industrial Park: aiming to support and develop the agro-industrial sector and provide more than 5,000 jobs; the donor is the Japanese Government;
- Jenin Industrial Free Zone: targeting agricultural, food and high-tech industries; the donor is the German Government, with the involvement of a Turkish firm;
- Gaza Industrial Estate: targeting food, wood, plastic, aluminium and textiles, among others; the donors are the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, the European Investment Bank and the European Union.

31. The Jericho zone has made relative progress; nonetheless, all the economic and industrial zones have had problems with implementation. Several others are still in preliminary study phases or still attempting to secure financing, including the Industrial City of Tarqumiya in the Hebron governorate and the Information Technological Park in Tulkarm. It is, however, important to distinguish between zones approved and administered by the Palestinian Government and those planned for externally. Israel actively promotes economic zones as fostering collaboration and economic linkages and contributing to peace, but clearly envisages them as operating within the framework of the occupation and under complete Israeli control. For example, reports tell of discrimination against Palestinian workers in the Barkan Industrial Park, and of numerous polluting factories moving to this industrial zone and others industrial settlement areas, causing damage to the surrounding Palestinian areas and population. Only those zones under Palestinian authority, ownership and supervision can potentially serve the Palestinian economy and achieve socioeconomic gains.

32. The challenges to industrialization in the occupied Palestinian territory are truly formidable, including the lack of a clear, proactive and implementable industrialization strategy.[35] Moreover, the scope for economic restructuring is severely circumscribed, not only due to the internal capacity limitations of the Palestinian Government, but also, and more importantly, because the Paris Protocol did not provide it with the authority nor with the tools necessary for effective economic management.[36]

IV. CONCLUSION

33. Israeli authorities persist in practices and policies that violate international law, including confiscation of Palestinian land, settlement and exploitation of Palestinian natural resources for the benefit of Israeli economy.[37]

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[34] See http://www.bmipbethlehem.com/index.php/blog/brochure/item/download/9_e401b7237fd7524139dd21c15b7fc785.

[35] Loai Aburaida and Flavio Nunes, "Internal obstacles to West Bank industrial development: governmental and private management decisions", *European Journal of Business and Management*, vol. 10, No. 3 (2018).

[36] Mohammed Samhouri, "Fifty years of Israeli-Palestinian economic relations, 1967-2017: what have we learned?", *Palestine-Israel Journal*, vol. 22, Nos. 2&3 (2017).

[37] S/RES/2334 (2016); A/RES/71/97; E/RES/2018/20; A/HRC/RES/37/36; A/RES/3175 (XXVIII); A/68/379; A/HRC/34/39; A/66/364.

34. Deliberate Israeli occupation policies have over decades undermined Palestinian ability to build an economy that meets the needs of the Palestinian people and society, while ensuring near-absolute Palestinian economic dependence on Israel. Unfortunately, there is no sign of real change on the horizon.

35. The Palestinian Government can undoubtedly take more effective steps to promote industrialization, such as establishing and promoting industrial banks and attracting more partners and foreign investment for industrial zones. However, the space available for formulating and implementing viable economic policies is limited under near complete Israeli control, which has consistently sought to foil the development of a prosperous independent Palestinian economy. Indeed, development of such an economy requires not only a comprehensive and coherent vision of economic transformation and industrialization, but also sovereignty and control over resources, trade routes and inputs, all of which are unattainable under the occupation. In fact, in the current situation, projects such as industrial cities could easily end up serving the occupation and the Israeli economy.

36. Current reality and rapid developments do not bode well for the establishment of a Palestinian State in the foreseeable future, nor for the cessation by Israel of its disregard for international law and resolutions. This raises serious questions about the possibility of emergence of a strong and sustainable Palestinian economy within the framework of an independent and viable Palestinian State.

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Climate change in the Arab region: relevant regional and international developments

Summary

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is supporting member States with technical assistance and capacity development in the areas of climate change assessment, adaptation, mitigation and negotiations. Those efforts are in response to resolutions adopted at the thirtieth ESCWA session and prior sessions, as well as resolutions adopted by ministerial councils responsible for water, the environment, electricity and meteorology under the auspices of the League of Arab States.

The present document reviews preparations for climate change negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the issuance of associated scientific work conducted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in the light of commitments set forth under the Paris Agreement. This includes support to Arab States with respect to the update of nationally determined contributions anticipated for submission in 2020 and other issues under negotiation. The document also reviews the delivery of a range of climate change-related services and events under the newly created Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies, and complementary and forthcoming activities supporting ESCWA member States in the areas of capacity-building, technical assistance, regional platforms, integrated planning and access to knowledge.

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Introduction

1. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is supporting member States with technical assistance and capacity development in the areas of climate change assessment, adaptation, mitigation and negotiations. Those efforts are in response to resolution 329 (XXX) adopted at the thirtieth ESCWA session, which was held in Beirut, from 25 to 28 June 2018, as well as prior requests for assistance received from member States, including those articulated in resolutions adopted by ministerial councils that convene under the auspices of the League of Arab States. Over the past six months, such efforts have included delivering technical and capacity-building support to ESCWA member States, and responding to ministerial resolutions adopted by the Arab Ministerial Water Council, the Council of Ministers Responsible for the Environment, the Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity, and the Arab Council of Ministers Responsible for Meteorology and Climate and its associated Arab Permanent Committee for Meteorology.

2. The present document reviews recent developments in the climate change arena within the context of global climate change negotiations of particular interest to Arab countries, as well as work related to the establishment of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies and the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR), in accordance with resolution 329 (XXX). It also outlines planned future activities and presents recommendations for consideration.

I. CLIMATE CHANGE NEGOTIATIONS

A. Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C

3. The twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) invited the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to prepare a special report on global warming of 1.5°C, as part of the decision that led to the adoption of the Paris Agreement in December 2015.

4. Based on intergovernmental and expert deliberations on the scope of the report and possible socioeconomic scenarios for modelling a 1.5°C outcome, the report was prepared under the joint scientific leadership of all three IPCC working groups. A total of 91 authors covering 44 nationalities prepared the report with the support of 133 contributing authors. The final title of the report is "Global warming of 1.5°C, an IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty". It is also referred to as the Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C.

5. The Special Report's Summary for Policymakers was approved by Governments at the IPCC meeting in Incheon, Republic of Korea, on 8 October 2018. It will serve as a scientific contribution to the Talanoa Dialogue at the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP24) to the UNFCCC to be held in Katowice, Poland from 2 to 14 December 2018.

6. The Special Report finds that since pre-industrial times, human activities have caused approximately 1°C of global warming to date. At this rate, the global average temperature will reach 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels between 2030 and 2052. However, it recognizes that some parts of the world will warm faster than others, and that more extreme climate events are to be expected.

7. The Special Report highlights that a number of climate change impacts could be avoided by limiting global warming to 1.5°C compared with 2°C or more. It also recognizes that limiting warming to 1.5°C requires changes in production and consumption patterns at an unprecedented scale to drastically cut carbon dioxide emissions before 2030. Various greenhouse gas emissions pathways for reaching a 1.5°C target include a

range of technological and geoengineering options, significant deep emission cuts across all sectors, and major behavioural changes.

8. The Special Report also states that climate-related risks for natural and human systems are higher for global warming of 1.5°C than at present, but lower than at 2°C. Those risks depend on the magnitude and rate of warming, geographic location, levels of development and vulnerability, and on the choices and implementation of adaptation and mitigation options. It also finds that limits to adaptive capacity that exist at 1.5°C of global warming become more pronounced at higher levels of warming and vary by sector, with site-specific implications for vulnerable regions, ecosystems and human health. The Special Report thus asserts that adaptation is always needed, and must be considered alongside mitigation efforts. It also examines the impact of global warming on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

9. To raise regional awareness of the IPCC findings, ESCWA collaborated with the Mohamed VI Polytechnic University to convene the International Conference on Adaptation Metrics and Techniques for Water, Agriculture and Resilient Cities (Benguerir, Morocco, 26-27 October 2018). The Conference included an outreach event on the IPCC Special Report held on 26 October, which was attended by the IPCC Chair, the IPCC Secretary and several representatives of IPCC working groups. The Conference was preceded by advanced courses on adaptation metrics and techniques for agriculture and water, held at Mohamed VI Polytechnic University on 24 and 25 October 2018. Alongside ESCWA and RICCAR, the Office chérifien des phosphates, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), 4C Maroc and the Research Institute for Development also contributed to those events. Several participants requested RICCAR datasets following the Conference, and expressed their appreciation for the regional outputs on climate, water and vulnerability.

B. Preparations for COP 24

10. COP24 is part of the Katowice Climate Change Conference, which will also include the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the third part of the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement. The Conference will also include the forty-ninth session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation, and the seventh part of the first session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement.

11. It is expected that the Conference will finalize the rules for implementing the Paris Agreement under the Paris Agreement Work Programme. It will also include a number of high-level events, mandated events, action events and round tables. The Talanoa Dialogue will take stock of the collective efforts of parties to achieve the long-term goal of the Paris Agreement, and inform the preparation of nationally determined contributions, which should be updated and submitted by 2020.

12. In preparation for those global negotiations, the eleventh Regional Training Workshop on Capacity Development for Climate Change Negotiations for the Arab Countries was organized in Cairo from 13 to 15 November 2018 by the League of Arab States and ESCWA, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme and the Cairo Office of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Arab Group of climate change negotiators participates in these biannual workshops, which are called for under ESCWA resolution 329 (XXX) and mandated by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment and the Arab Ministerial Water Council. ESCWA support for those workshops is provided through the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation (RPTC).

13. Participants at the Regional Training Workshop discussed the latest negotiation items under the Paris Agreement Work Programme as they relate to adaptation, mitigation, finance, technology, carbon markets, trade and other matters. They reviewed the outcomes of the 2018 Talanoa Dialogue, and examined the status of negotiations and possible scenarios for a Katowice package, including desired outcome, difficulties, redlines, and linkages. They also discussed issues related to including adaptation as an element of nationally determined

contributions, and how to define the global adaptation goal. Moreover, they reviewed the key findings of the IPCC Special Report and their implications for Arab countries.

14. They debated the proposed transparency system, and the importance of balancing transparency of action and support was identified as a priority for developing countries. They addressed other important topics, including the operationalization of policy measures to respond to the expected impacts of climate change response measures, market and non-market approaches and possible outcome and trade-offs, the current status of technology framework implementation, features of nationally determined contributions, information and accounting. A common position paper was then developed by the Arab Group on the above issues in preparation for the COP24 negotiations.

II. ARAB CENTRE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE POLICES

15. The establishment of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies was welcomed by ESCWA member States in resolution 329 (XXX). The resolution requests ESCWA to support member States through five pillars of work focused on the following: (a) providing technical assistance and advisory services; (b) capacity building and the strengthening of institutional frameworks; (c) supporting regional platforms and regional consensus-building; (d) promoting integrated responses to climate challenges affecting water, energy and food security; and (e) providing access to regional knowledge and information through the Regional Knowledge Hub. The resolution also provides further detail on areas of capacity-building and iterated its support for RICCAR-related work, including the partnerships that ESCWA maintains with the League of Arab States and other relevant organizations.

A. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

16. The Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies consolidates the work of ESCWA on climate change under a common umbrella. Several activities have been undertaken in support of the Centre through the use of extrabudgetary resources (XB) and funds secured through the RPTC. The table below sets out the advisory missions, meetings and workshops undertaken during the second half of 2018 drawing upon these resources.

17. The online platform of the RICCAR Regional Knowledge Hub was launched in June 2018 and is available at www.riccar.org. A memorandum of understanding was signed between ESCWA and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to develop and host the data portal component of the Regional Knowledge Hub, including all the geospatial datasets and modelling outputs generated for the Arab region. ESCWA and the Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid and Dry Lands (ACSAD) of the League of Arab States manage the technical secretariat of the Regional Knowledge Hub, and the Technical Scientific and Advisory Committee Arab Ministerial Water Council oversees its operations.

18. ESCWA and ACSAD are collaborating on the delivery of climate change datasets and training through RICCAR and the Food and Water Security in the Arab Region project, which are both funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-scale Renewable Energy Applications in Rural Areas of the Arab Region further supports the work of the Arab Centre and is also funded by Sida.

19. Numerous requests for RICCAR datasets were received from ministries, regional organizations, universities and researchers. A regional advisor is being recruited to help respond to those requests and to deliver training on the use of the datasets at smaller scales of analysis using geographic information system tools. The knowledge products and services delivered through the Regional Knowledge Hub support the work of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies.

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BETWEEN JULY AND DECEMBER 2018

Event	Venue	Date	Pillar of work (see para. 15)	Funding source
Training Workshop on Climate Change Analysis using Geographic Information Systems	Beirut	19-20 September	b	XB
Technical backstopping to national teams for the preparation of national assessment reports of changing water availability on agriculture crop production in the Arab region for Iraq, Jordan and the State of Palestine	Amman	For Iraq: 2-3 September For Jordan: 10-11 September For the State of Palestine: 12-13 September	a	XB
Declaration on Climate Change Ethics Seminar (organized by UNESCO)	Cairo	24-25 September	c	RPTC
Symposium on Cyclones and Flash Floods (contribution requested by Oman Water Society)	Muscat	8-9 October	a	XB
Cairo Water Week: RICCAR presentations delivered during (a) main conference; and (b) International Commission on Irrigation Drainage special meeting for young professionals	Cairo	15-16 October	a, b	XB
Advanced Courses on Adaptation Metrics for Agriculture and Water	Benguerir, Morocco	24-25 October	b	XB
International Conference on Adaptation Metrics and Techniques for Water, Agriculture and Resilient Cities, including Outreach Event on the IPCC Special Report on 1.5 degrees	Benguerir, Morocco	26-27 October	a	XB
Consultation meetings in pilot countries on small-scale renewable energy applications in the Arab region	Tunis Beirut Amman	Tunis: 29-31 October Beirut: 23 November Amman: Dec (tbc)	a	XB
Eleventh Regional Training Workshop on Capacity Development for Climate Change Negotiations for the Arab Countries	Cairo	12-15 November	b	RPTC
Arab Climate Outlook Forum (ArabCOF) – third meeting (hosted by the Egyptian Meteorological Authority)	Cairo	26-29 November	c	XB
National Training Workshop on the Application of Climate Change Impact and Vulnerability Assessments for Lebanon (requested by the Ministry of Agriculture)	Beirut	26-30 November	b	XB
Colloquium on Hydrodiplomacy and Climate Change for Peace in Mesopotamia: Case of the Tigris and Euphrates (organized by MEDURABLE, MENBO and French Senate)	Paris	10 December	a	XB
National Workshop on the Sendai Framework Monitor and National Disaster Loss Accounting System and Linkage of Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction for Iraq (requested by the Ministry of Health and Environment)	Beirut	18-21 December	b	RPTC
National Training Workshop on the Application of Climate Change Impact and Vulnerability Assessments for Tunisia (requested by the Ministry of Agriculture)	Tunis	December/January (tbc)	b	XB

B. Related activities

20. In addition to the aforementioned climate change activities conducted under the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies, a series of regular budget activities were also completed during the second half of 2018 that upscale and complement the work of the Centre with new knowledge products.

21. The seventh issue of the ESCWA Water Development Report focuses on climate change and disaster risk reduction, and was released in Arabic and English in October 2018. It examines the links between climate change and communities at risk, and considers policies to address natural disasters, particularly water-related disasters such as droughts, floods and landslides, which are being exacerbated by climate change. It draws on RICCAR outputs and includes analysis on the risk and frequency of disasters and resulting losses in selected Arab countries based on work conducted in cooperation with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The Water Development Report will inform the national workshop requested by Iraq to support the preparation of their Sendai Framework communication (see table).

22. The ninth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development was convened by the five United Nations regional commissions in Kiev from 12 to 15 November 2018. ESCWA organized several sessions at the Forum on renewable energy and energy efficiency, including a joint session on tracking progress on SDG 7. Participants examined issues related to data digitization and finance, and support for regional engagement on climate change mitigation.

23. ESCWA is also implementing the United Nations Development Account project on up-scaling energy efficiency in the residential and services sectors in the Arab region, which aims to improve energy efficiency and thus reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Consultative meetings and advisory services were conducted in Tunis from 29 to 30 October 2018, and will be conducted in Jordan on 15 December 2018 and in Kuwait later in December.

C. Resource mobilization and partnerships

24. ESCWA has organized meetings with several prospective partners and donors that have expressed interest in the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies since its establishment in June 2018.

25. Meetings were organized with the Islamic Development Bank in Beirut in August and October 2018 to discuss opportunities for collaboration and support. ESCWA subsequently submitted to the Islamic Development Bank a concept note in October 2018, which led to the Bank expressing interest in further discussions on ways to collaborate on climate change and the SDGs.

26. The work pillars of the Arab Centre and the ways in which RICCAR is contributing to that work were presented at meetings with Sida in Stockholm in August 2018 and in Beirut in September 2018. Interest in a second phase of RICCAR, which would support the work of the Arab Centre, was expressed, with the caveat that the next project funding cycle would likely not be possible before 2020 given that the current RICCAR funding line runs through December 2019.

27. ESCWA met with the Global Energy Interconnection Development and Cooperation Organization (GEIDCO) in Beirut in November 2018 to present the work of the Arab Centre within the context of its energy and sustainable development work programme. The meeting built on previous exchanges that proposed the signing of a memorandum of understanding to establish a general framework for cooperation on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, in particular SDG 7 on ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all and promoting and supporting international energy cooperation.

28. In August 2018, the ESCWA Executive Secretary sent a communication to the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC Secretariat on the establishment of the Centre, which resulted in the UNFCCC designating counterparts to coordinate with ESCWA on the work of the Centre in October 2018. UNFCCC also

contributed to the Workshop on Environment Statistics and Information for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region, which was held in Beirut from 12 to 16 November 2018 and featured a session on climate change statistics, databases and RICCAR. The United Nations Statistics Division, the European Environment Agency and the United Nations Environment Programme partnered with ESCWA on the workshop, which also supported the work of the Arab Centre.

III. PLANNED ACTIVITIES

A. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL FORUMS

29. The 2019 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development will focus on the theme "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality". Six SDGs are identified for focused review, including SDG 13 which encourages urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. This global forum will be preceded by the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development to be held by ESCWA in Beirut from 16 to 18 April 2019, which will also focus on SDG 13. ESCWA will support awareness raising and consensus-building for climate action at those regional and global forums based on regionally identified challenges and priorities.

30. Member States and partners have also expressed their interest in organizing a joint event on the sidelines of the High-level Political Forum session to be convened in July and September 2019, noting that the second part of the Forum will be held following the United Nations Climate Summit, which will be convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in New York on 23 September 2019.

31. ESCWA will also provide substantive support on climate change to other regional forums, including the Arab Water Week (Dead Sea, Jordan, 3-7 March 2019), the thirteenth Gulf Water Conference (Kuwait City, 12-14 March 2019) and the Land and Water Days (Cairo, April 2019). Those forums will provide opportunities to strengthen partnerships and collaboration with member States.

B. REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

32. ESCWA will convene a regional consultative meeting on climate change in Beirut in February 2019 to support regional preparations for the 2019 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and the High-level Political Forum. This regional consultation is expected to provide substantive input to regional and global forums on Arab climate change perspectives through the issuance of an outcome statement. Several partners have already expressed interest in contributing to this regional consultation, which will be organized by ESCWA under the umbrella of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies.

33. Special effort will be made to engage ESCWA member States delivering voluntary national reviews at the 2019 High-level Political Forum in this regional consultation, namely Kuwait, Oman and Tunisia. Algeria will also be presenting a voluntary national review for the first time. The regional consultation will assist Arab States to prepare and position their proposed actions and reports on progress within the regional context.

C. OTHER ACTIVITIES

34. ESCWA will continue to support member States by providing assistance through the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies and its regular programme of work.

35. ESCWA will also continue to systematically offer climate change analysis and present its climate change activities at intergovernmental meetings, as requested by intergovernmental mechanisms at the following upcoming meetings:

(a) Meeting of the Subcommittee on Weather and Climate Risk Information Management (Cairo, January 2019);

(b) Fourth meeting of the Arab Climate Outlook Forum (venue and date to be confirmed);

(c) Thirty-fifth meeting of the Arab Permanent Committee for Meteorology (Cairo, April 2019);

(d) Twelfth session of the ESCWA Committee on Energy (Beirut, April 2019);

(e) Thirteenth session of the ESCWA Committee on Water Resources (Beirut, May 2019);

(f) Twelfth Regional Training Workshop on Capacity Development for Climate Change Negotiations for the Arab Countries (venue and date to be confirmed);

(g) Eighteenth session of the Arab Ministerial Water Council Technical Scientific Advisory Committee (Cairo, June 2019).

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

36. The ESCWA Executive Committee may wish to consider the following:

(a) Continue drawing upon climate change analysis, findings, recommendations and services available through the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies to inform regional and national policies, strategies, reports and research;

(b) Take note of efforts to mobilize financial resources to support the activities of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies, including the RICCAR Regional Knowledge Hub, for the provision of knowledge resources tailored to the needs of the region, and urge for the intensification of those efforts. Those additional resources would complement the extrabudgetary project funds and resources provided through the regular programme of technical cooperation that already support the work of the Centre;

(c) Continue regional consultations on climate change to support regional exchange and priority-setting on climate action with respect to SDG 13 to inform regional preparations and inputs for the 2019 High-level Political Forum.

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Item 9 of the provisional agenda

Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development: five years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration

Summary

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) will submit to the Executive Committee at its fifth meeting the report of the Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development: Five Years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration, which was held at the United Nations House in Beirut from 30 October to 1 November 2018.

ESCSWA organized the Arab Regional Conference, in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund and the League of Arab States, to review and follow up on the implementation of the 2013 Cairo Declaration emanating from the Regional Conference on Population and Development in the Arab States (Cairo, 24-26 June 2013).

The attached report contains the key messages from the Beirut conference, which will be submitted to the Commission on Population and Development of the Economic and Social Council at its fifty-second session, as a document setting out the key messages from the Arab region. The report will also be submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, to be held in New York from 9 to 15 July 2019 on the theme "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality".

Member States are invited to take note of the report and comment on ESCWA activities in the field of population and development.

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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Report

Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development: Five Years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration

United Nations House, Beirut, 30 October – 1 November 2018

United Nations
Beirut, 2018

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Population Fund and the League of Arab States organized the Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development: Five Years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration, which was held at the United Nations House in Beirut from 30 October to 1 November 2018.

2. The Conference constituted a high-level regional platform to review and follow up on the implementation of the 2013 Cairo Declaration emanating from the Regional Conference on Population and Development in the Arab States on the theme "Development challenges and population dynamics in a changing Arab world", which was held in Cairo from 24 to 26 June 2013 to review the implementation of the Programme of Action resulting from the International Conference on Population and Development that was held in Cairo in 1994. The Programme of Action represented a paradigm shift in the approach to population; it established a solid link between population, steady economic development and sustainable development; and went beyond a quantitative view of population to a broader perspective which recognizes that investment in individual capacity, dignity and human rights is the foundation of sustainable development.

3. The Arab Regional Conference's agenda comprised 10 sessions, which included a presentation of a draft regional report on progress in achieving the goals of the 2013 Cairo Declaration, and country presentations on the issue. Presentations and discussions focused on the links between population and sustainable development. The Conference, which coincided with the start of the fourth implementation year of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, provided an opportunity for participants to review the links between the 2013 Cairo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda and its Goals and targets, to explore ways to include population dynamics and issues in development planning, and to improve measuring tools and identify mechanisms to monitor the population dimension in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

4. Fourteen Arab countries presented their voluntary national reviews. The presentations and discussions helped determine priorities, trends and emerging issues in the region, and assess progress and identify gaps in implementing the 2013 Cairo Declaration in Arab countries. The Conference also provided an opportunity to consider successful experiences.

5. Participants agreed on several key messages, which were grouped according to the issues discussed at each session of the Conference. The present report will be submitted to the Commission on Population and Development at its fifty-second session as a document setting out the key messages from the Arab region. The present report will also be submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development on the theme "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality".

I. KEY MESSAGES FROM THE 2018 ARAB REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

A. General messages

(1) Reaffirm the 2013 Cairo Declaration emanating from the Regional Conference on Population and Development in the Arab States on the theme "Development challenges and population dynamics in a changing Arab world" as a comprehensive vision on population issues, and reconfirm commitment to its principles and goals aimed at achieving dignity, equality, respect for human rights and gender mainstreaming and at empowering population groups, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized;

(2) Work on facing structural challenges and social, economic, cultural and environmental obstacles to reduce disparities between countries and achieve the goals of the Cairo Declaration;

(3) Recognize the challenges caused by demographic changes and transformations in some Arab countries, and adopt a new approach that balances between individual freedom and the common good and that takes into account population dynamics in development planning at the national and subnational levels, so as to achieve balanced development based on a strong political will, a clear vision, planned budgets, disaggregated and timely information and data, and cohesive, integrated and inclusive cross-sectoral programmes that involve all stakeholders;

(4) Emphasize the links between the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Cairo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda, and stress the importance of focusing on the population dimension in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

(5) Stress the role of young people as a creative and pioneering force, and the importance of empowering them economically, socially and politically and of building their capacity, enriching their knowledge and involving them in developing, implementing and following up on policies and population programmes, so as to capitalize on the demographic dividend;

(6) Confirm the centrality of women's role and the importance of empowering them economically, socially and politically and of involving them in decision-making;

(7) Work on ensuring a paradigm shift in the approach to population issues, from one focused on controlling population growth, to a rights-based approach that enshrines human rights, including reproductive rights according to the Cairo Declaration, and freedom of choice to achieve gender equality and empower women, girls, young people, persons with disabilities, older persons and the most vulnerable social groups;

(8) Commit to the principles of good governance to ensure strong, efficient, transparent and accountable institutions that work to formulate, implement and review population-related development policies;

(9) In implementing the 2013 Cairo Declaration, promote participatory work between all government stakeholders, parliaments and civil society organizations, including youth organizations, religion-based organizations, academia, research centres, the private sector, trade unions, political parties, the media, United Nations entities working in the Arab region and the League of Arab States;

(10) Stress the importance of ending conflicts and achieving stability in the Arab region, and the positive implications of doing so on population development and on achieving desired goals.

B. Population policies and development planning in the Arab region: trends and national responses

(1) Ensure that national legal frameworks, such as constitutions, legislation and budgets, adopt a rights-based approach to create an environment that supports the development, implementation and review of population policies;

(2) Ensure the inclusion of population priorities in national development plans at the national and subnational levels and broaden participation in policy development, implementation and evaluation to achieve effective policies that respond to population priorities, by building national capacity and knowledge of inclusive development;

(3) Ensure that population policies are consistent with the principles of global frameworks, including the 2013 Cairo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda, and are participatory, innovative, inclusive and cross-sectoral to promote concerted efforts and coordination between institutions;

(4) Ensure that population policies and development planning take into account the local level and address development disparities between urban areas and between urban and rural areas;

(5) Ensure the flexibility of population and development policies to respond to changes and developments at the national, regional and global levels, and stress the importance of periodically reviewing them through clear and measurable methodologies and indicators;

(6) Confirm the need to address the negative effects of political and security crises on populations, which could include limited access to reproductive health services and contraceptives, increased maternal mortality, the spread of early marriage, child labour and cheap labour, fewer employment opportunities, and limited access to education, especially among refugee children, and difficulties in collecting and updating data;

(7) Stress the importance of developing new indicators in line with situations in conflict-affected countries, and incorporating them in population policies and plans. Emerging indicators include those on migration, especially forced displacement, on the impact of conflict on household structures and components, and on the role of women in households and society;

(8) Affirm the important role of religion-based institutions in supporting population and development issues, and the need to involve clerics in raising awareness on population issues;

(9) Ensure the active participation of civil society organizations in evaluating and following up on public policies, establish clear mechanisms for that purpose, and adopt specific standards for associations that might be entrusted with that task;

(10) Confirm the need to develop an effective monitoring and follow-up system, and the needed statistical systems, which provide the necessary indicators to monitor progress in achieving the goals of the 2013 Cairo Declaration and the SDGs.

C. Interlinkages between the 2013 Cairo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda

(1) The 2030 Agenda and the SGDs are fully consistent with the values, principles and provisions of the 2013 Cairo Declaration, including focusing on a rights-based approach in methods and policies and in monitoring and evaluation;

(2) Integration between the Cairo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda does not require their merger and is not limited to a reciprocal relationship or common issues. The Programme of Action set out in the Cairo Declaration has specificities and topics not covered by the 2030 Agenda, and has mechanisms, methods and cumulative expertise that require it to remain an independent programme that complements the 2030 Agenda;

(3) It is vital to increase understanding of the links between the Cairo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda to review population issues in the context of implementing the SDGs. The Cairo Declaration and the 2018 Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development are highly significant in the review and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda at the national and regional levels. The Cairo Declaration and the review of its Programme of Action assisted in establishing a foundation and roadmap for sustainable development in the Arab region that take into account equality, human rights and population issues;

(4) Arab countries must consider the population dimension when preparing voluntary national reviews that assess progress in achieving the SDGs, and which are submitted to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development;

(5) In the future, the review of the Cairo Declaration should be coordinated in parallel with the review of the 2030 Agenda, conducted once every four years, to ensure that the findings of the Cairo Declaration review and its commitments are inputs in the review of the 2030 Agenda;

(6) The Cairo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda urge countries to produce and disseminate data disaggregated by gender, age and urbanization level, among others, to develop population policies that achieve the slogan of the 2030 Agenda on ensuring that no one is left behind and to institutionalize partnerships;

(7) The 2030 Agenda provides countries with the opportunity to operationalize the commitments set out in international development frameworks on population and development, including the Cairo Declaration, by creating an appropriate environment for systematic work aimed at achieving goals and monitoring means of implementation, such as knowledge, technology, data and financing. In the 2030 Agenda, heads of States and Governments unanimously confirmed the outcomes of all United Nations conferences, which laid solid foundations for sustainable development and specifically noted the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. They also reaffirmed their commitments to following up and reviewing those conferences as part of the follow-up and review of the SDGs, so as to achieve sustainable development at the national, regional and international levels;

(8) The 2030 Agenda enshrines the principle of partnership, especially with civil society and the private sector that play a key role in implementing programmes on population and development, assessing their effectiveness and monitoring progress.

D. Ensuring a life of dignity for all: empowering priority sociodemographic groups

(1) Provide social protection to the entire population in the context of comprehensive social and economic structural reforms that enshrine human rights, justice, dignity and equality;

(2) Empower marginalized and the most vulnerable social groups, especially adolescents, young people, women, persons with disabilities, older persons and migrants, and involve those groups in developing economic and social policies and in the sustainable development process;

(3) Take into account the concept of family and intergenerational relationships and include it in discussions on population issues, and incorporate households in population policies as a social unit that affects individual and social wellbeing;

(4) Conduct a critical review of some social values and customs that perpetuate social stereotypes regarding girls, women, persons with disabilities, older persons, migrants and refugees, and that support practices that limit the rights of those social groups and weaken their capacity;

(5) Promote cooperation between Governments, civil society organizations, the private sector and trade unions to build upon the positive aspects of cultural patters and societal values and to tackle their negative aspects, and involve religious institutions and academia in supporting population and development issues and raise awareness thereon.

1. *Young people*

(6) Empower young people so as to benefit from the demographic window by increasing their economic participation and providing them with decent and formal employment, developing policies aimed at strengthening entrepreneurship, self-employment and vocational and technical training, and enhancing the link between education outputs and skills-building. It is also vital

to include young people in social protection systems, reduce their sense of exclusion, protect them from extremism, and build their trust in their States by involving them in decision-making and encouraging their political participation;

(7) Focus on different subgroups within youth groups, including adolescents, students, spouses, parents and workers, which requires developing policies that take into account the varied needs of those groups;

(8) Stress the importance of youth access to information, skills and opportunities to enable them to realize their full potential and play their fundamental role as drivers of positive change in their societies and countries so as to benefit from the demographic dividend;

(9) Reduce youth unemployment by assessing labour market needs and guiding education institutions and students (young women and men) towards specializations that facilitate access to the labour market.

2. *Persons with disabilities*

(10) Adopt an inclusive approach to ensure the economic, political and social participation of persons with disabilities; this approach must respect their rights and provide comprehensive health care, including sexual and reproductive health care, and must go beyond the provision of care to focus on their empowerment and promote their role in all economic, social and political fields;

(11) Allocate budgets to provide services that guarantee and facilitate a dignified life for all by incorporating disability issues in national development plans and programmes.

3. *Women*

(12) Guarantee women's rights as an integral part of human rights, and promote women's political participation as a prerequisite for democratic transition;

(13) Overcome structural obstacles and social restrictions that hamper women's advancement and self-realization and impede their participation in the development process, review legislative systems to create more opportunities for women's empowerment and protection from all forms of discrimination and violence, and improve the policy environment to support their employment and economic participation, especially by ensuring labour market access to young women;

(14) Confirm the importance of empowering women in times of conflict, especially women heads of households;

(15) Ensure that development strategies and plans are gender-responsive, and monitor budgets allocated to supporting gender equality in the context of sustainable development.

4. *Older persons*

(16) Highlight care for older persons as a regional priority, especially in view of changing social roles and demographic transformations in the region;

(17) Develop policies and programmes that take into account older persons' needs and guarantee their autonomy, such as systems for social protection, retirement, comprehensive health care, including sexual and reproductive care, and protection against violence, neglect and physical and psychological abuse.

E. Ensuring a healthy life for all: achieving the outcomes of the Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development and the SDGs

(1) Broaden the definition of health to include its multiple dimensions, including sexual and reproductive health, chronic and infectious diseases and mental health;

(2) Adopt a life-cycle approach that takes into account age and social status, and develop interlinked and consistent health programmes and services that reflect the multiple dimensions of health and their interconnections and interactions;

(3) Recognize the link between the right to choose, fertility rates and population growth, and stress the importance of providing quality information, health care and reproductive services for the entire population, especially young people, women, people living in rural and isolated areas, persons with disabilities and older persons;

(4) Translate international commitments on sexual and reproductive health for all into rights-based policies, implement awareness raising programmes on sexual health, especially for young people, people living in rural and isolated areas and people in conflict situations, and mobilize the required budgets to implement those programmes;

(5) Achieve universal health coverage and provide quality, low-cost health care and sexual and reproductive services for all, especially poor and vulnerable groups;

(6) Address the lack of data on the sexual and reproductive health of wide segments of the population;

(7) Provide youth-friendly services for sexual and reproductive health, offer health and psychological services to women and girls survivors of physical, sexual and mental abuse, raise health awareness and train service providers in that field, and incorporate sexual education in education programmes and develop those programmes to properly educate future generations;

(8) Formulate policies and programmes that meet the health needs of older persons, including hospital care and primary health care, which requires training medical and nursing staff, establishing geriatrics departments in medical schools, reducing out-of-pocket expenditures, and developing data on older persons' health;

(9) Respond to health challenges resulting from migration and displacement, including limited access to sexual and reproductive services, gender-based violence, sexual assault, forced marriage, child marriage, and the physical and psychological effects of conflict;

(10) Strengthen the role of non-government organizations in providing health services for migrants and refugees to rapidly meet their needs and to bridge gaps in service access and provision to migrants and refugees in the region;

(11) Develop programmes and monitor budgets to combat sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, collect relevant data, and establish a database for that purpose;

(12) Urge Arab countries to ratify the Arab AIDS Strategy and increase national programmes to combat AIDS, including through prevention, treatment and care for individuals living with HIV, and respect the rights of that social group.

F. Mobility and environmental sustainability

(1) Recognize that population issues, including those related to urban development, environmental sustainability and migration governance, are intertwined and intersect, and avoid addressing them as stand-alone sectoral issues with individual goals that are independent from other goals;

(2) Reduce irregular migration and expand the scope of safe, orderly and regular migration to empower migrants and benefit from the economic opportunities offered by migration, and to protect migrants from the dangers of human smuggling and trafficking;

(3) Adopt a rights-based approach in dealing with migrants, refugees and displaced persons, especially children, women, young people, girls, older persons and persons with disabilities, and work on integrating them, helping them adapt in host countries and meeting their needs, including access to information and reproductive health services;

(4) Work on altering stereotypes of migrants and refugees from burdens for host countries to viewing them as a real development opportunity;

(5) Work together to tackle the drivers of migration and displacement in the Arab region by promoting country stability and coordinating efforts to protect rights and strengthen the rule of law;

(6) Respect the rights of Palestinian refugees in accordance with international law, particularly the right to return, and galvanize political and financial support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to ensure its continuity;

(7) Increase international support to countries hosting refugees to enable them to continue providing inclusive services and care to refugees;

(8) Adopt innovative new approaches to urban management and expansion and develop related policies in line with population policies to ensure the sustainability of cities and the wellbeing of inhabitants, and strengthen social services and economic and investment opportunities for people living in rural areas to avoid marginalization that drives internal migration and movement to cities;

(9) Stress that the environment is a human right and adopt flexible policies that respond to population growth and human movement and that address their negative impact, including increased energy consumption, water waste and rising emissions that contribute to climate change;

(10) Review individual practices regarding natural resource consumption, and raise awareness of consumption practices that contribute to environmental sustainability;

(11) Recognize the environmental dimension as a main driver of migration and displacement, given its direct impact on populations, especially the most vulnerable among them;

(12) Focus on data and statistics and on conducting studies and research to assist decision-makers and the international community in making decisions and developing policies that take into account migrant rights and offer them protection.

G. Moving forward: mobilizing means of implementation and follow-up mechanisms

(1) Affirm that the Programme of Action and the Cairo Declaration are necessary mechanisms for implementing the 2030 Agenda;

(2) Operationalize national population policies by adopting effective implementation and follow-up mechanisms that involve all national stakeholders;

(3) Promote the role of population institutions by increasing their independence, broadening their mandate, building their capacity and strengthening their coordination role;

(4) Secure sufficient budgets to cover the costs of projects and programmes on population and sustainable development in national plans;

(5) Promote the role of parliaments in addressing various population issues through holding the government accountable and monitoring the budget, and by incorporating population dynamics into adopted policies and following up on the implementation of the Cairo Declaration;

(6) Stress the importance of periodically reviewing the implementation of the Programme of Action and the 2013 Cairo Declaration in a transparent, bold and objective way using measurable indicators, and that runs in parallel with SDG reviews;

(7) Recognize the important role of data and the need to collect them and check their quality, sustainability and ease of access; use data in evidence-based policy development and decision-making; consider new technological tools and work on forging partnership to that end;

(8) Build the knowledge of decision makers who develop national and local sustainable development plans regarding population issues, sustainable development principles and the needs of vulnerable groups, especially women, young people, older persons, persons with disabilities and migrants, on how to incorporate those needs in policies and subsequently in plans and budgets;

(9) Stress the important role of civil society and the private sector, and join flexible coalitions that push for achieving gains in population and development issues;

(10) Take measures that guarantee to strengthen and promote the relationship and trust between Government and individuals.

H. Other messages

(1) The United Nations Population Fund is committed to supporting Arab countries in facing population challenges, including by providing reliable, accurate and detailed data, to tackling all forms of violence against women and girls and child marriage, to eliminating financial and technical obstacles that impede access to information and reproductive and sexual health services, and to supporting young people and building their leadership capacity;

(2) Urge international and regional institutions providing support to be aware of country priorities and aim to meet them, and focus on the importance of employing a bottom-up approach to population issues to ensure national ownership and accountability for all stakeholders, including Governments, civil society and the private sector;

(3) Intensify efforts to enable the newly established Arab Council for Population and Development of the League of Arab States to perform its functions so as to promote and coordinate work on population issues at the Arab and regional levels;

(4) Invite the United Nations Population Fund and the League of Arab States to support a project on women and family health so as to provide additional data on the status of women, households and other groups during the life cycle.

II. SESSIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

6. In addition to the opening and closing sessions, the Conference comprised 10 plenary sessions on its main theme "Five years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration". The sessions covered the following topics:

Preliminary session	State of World Population 2018 Report, demographic profile of the Arab region, and the Regional Review Report on Progress in Implementing the 2013 Cairo Declaration
Plenary session I and II	Five years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration: voluntary reporting by member States
Plenary session III	Support to member States in implementing the 2013 Cairo Declaration
Plenary session IV	High-level panel on population policies and development planning in the Arab region: trends and national responses
Plenary session X	Interlinkages between the 2013 Cairo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda
Plenary session VI	Ensuring a life of dignity for all: empowering priority sociodemographic groups
Plenary session VII	Ensuring a healthy life for all: achieving the International Conference on Population and Development and the SDGs
Plenary session VIII	Mobility and environmental sustainability
Plenary session IX	Moving forward: mobilizing means of implementation and follow-up mechanisms
Plenary session X	Presentation of key messages

7. The following sections summarize each session and the related topics of discussion.

A. OPENING SESSION

8. Ms. Natalia Kanem, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund; Ms. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Arab States; and Mr. Mounir Tabet, Acting Executive Secretary of ESCWA, made statements. They affirmed that the 2013 Cairo Declaration was a roadmap for Arab countries to work on incorporating the population dimension in development efforts and to take into account the priorities and challenges that differentiate the Arab region from other regions. They also stressed the importance of the rights-based approach as a fundamental principle for achieving inclusive, just and sustainable development.

B. PRELIMINARY SESSION

9. The opening session was followed by a preliminary session, which comprised the launch of the State of the World Population 2018 report and a presentation on the demographic profile of the Arab region. The initial findings of the draft Regional Review Report on Progress in Implementing the 2013 Cairo Declaration were also presented. The draft report was prepared over the period 2017-2018 by the Regional Office for Arab States

of the United Nations Population Fund, in collaboration with the League of Arab States and ESCWA. Participants focused on the impact of changing trends on population issues, the analysis of common trends in the region, best practices, challenges faced by Arab countries, and national institutions' role in implementing country commitments.

C. Plenary sessions

1. *Session I and II: Five years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration: voluntary reporting by member States*

10. The first two plenary sessions highlighted progress in implementing the 2013 Cairo Declaration after five years. Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Oman, Mauritania, Morocco, the State of Palestine, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen presented their national reviews on implementing the Cairo Declaration, focusing on progress, challenges, successful experiences, existing and emerging priorities, and lessons learned. Those presentations and reviews are a valuable source of information that will enrich the Regional Review Report on Progress in Implementing the 2013 Cairo Declaration.

11. The presentations highlighted disparities in the development, economic and political status of Arab countries. They focused on policy interventions taken by countries, but they also indicated the common implementation challenges faced by Arab countries, including the need to provide quality education and employment opportunities for young people, and tackling poverty, structural and social obstacles impeding women's empowerment and the lack of reliable and detailed data. Participants discussed stakeholders' role, including parliaments and civil society organizations, in the follow-up, monitoring and evaluation process and in preparing voluntary national reviews, so as to establish solid foundations for national ownership of population and development issues. They also stressed the importance of perpetuating the principle of 'leaving no one behind' and of reviewing the effectiveness of population policies.

12. Jordan was thanked for hosting the eighteenth Meeting of Population Councils and Committees (2017), at which was launched the charter of the Arab Council for Population and Development.

2. *Session III: Support to member States in implementing the 2013 Cairo Declaration*

13. Participants benefited from the presentations made by the League of Arab States, the United Nations Population Fund and ESCWA on activities to build knowledge and capacity, and the exchange and education programmes undertaken by the three organizations at the national and regional levels to support member States in implementing the Cairo Declaration and translating its messages into practical steps.

14. The activities of the League of Arab States included establishing the Arab Council for Population and Development, which has joined other social and economic councils in an effort to unify Arab population policies; adopting four priorities, namely migration and displacement, youth empowerment, women's empowerment, and reproductive and sexual health; developing a multi-sectoral Arab strategy on reproductive health and the wellbeing of mothers, children and girls; contributing to the establishment and operationalization of the Forum of African and Arab Parliamentarians for Population and Development; and formulating strategies to bridge data gaps.

15. The United Nations Population Fund, whose slogan is 'no real development without investment in human capital', developed evidence-based population policies, incorporated sexual and reproductive health programmes in the health system in general, encouraged the transfer of expertise under South-South cooperation, and supported countries suffering from humanitarian issues and instability. The representative of the Population Fund noted its important role in working with religious institutions and clerics, given their influence on the behaviour of individuals and society, especially regarding sexual and reproductive health and combatting gender-based violence. The Fund also noted its efforts in filling data gaps and supporting the

development of population indicators to monitor progress in the area of population development and the implementation of the Cairo Declaration.

16. ESCWA focused its efforts on population and development priorities and issues, including vulnerable social groups such as young people, women, older persons and persons with disabilities, and worked on issues such as migration, environmental sustainability, social justice and good governance. ESCWA provided support to Arab countries by building knowledge and publishing numerous leading reports in the Arab region. ESCWA also supported regional dialogue and consensus by holding several regional conferences, in collaboration with its partners, which brought together representatives of government and non-government organizations from various Arab countries, such as the Regional Consultation on International Migration and the Third Review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Arab Countries. Furthermore, ESCWA worked on building capacity by holding workshops and training sessions and by providing technical assistance to member States.

3. *Session IV: Population policies and development planning in the Arab region: trends and national responses*

17. The high-level panel discussed population trends and the relationship and correlation between population patterns and trends and social and economic development levels. It stressed the importance of national responses in population policies by incorporating population priorities and realities in development planning in the Arab region.

18. The findings of the survey on population policies in Arab countries, which covered 10 countries, indicated that constitutions and national laws enshrined the right to wellbeing for citizens and the presence of institutional measures on population and development issues. Major common challenges for countries revealed by the survey included the following: weak coordination between bodies concerned with population issues; limited public-private partnerships; failure to develop appropriate measures for monitoring and evaluating population policies; data gaps, especially regarding migration and displacement; and slow effective planning and implementation to benefit from the demographic window.

19. High-level representatives of Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic highlighted their countries' experiences in formulating population and development policies. They discussed the challenges facing their countries in achieving consistency and integration between policies and the factors that contributed to successfully and fully incorporating population issues in development planning.

4. *Session V: Interlinkages between the 2013 Cairo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda*

20. Presentations and discussions focused on enhancing participants' understanding of the relationship between population and sustainable development by highlighting the strong interlinkages between the Arab regional framework for population and development, as articulated in the Cairo Declaration, and the 2030 Agenda as the global framework for sustainable development.

21. The presentations demonstrated the interconnections and synergies between the two frameworks and their common priorities and principles. They indicated the historical advancement of global efforts towards development, which culminated in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015. The 2030 Agenda places human beings at the heart of the development process, stating that protecting the rights of all is a prerequisite for sustainable development. It also enshrines the principles of previous global frameworks, including the International Conference on Population and Development.

22. The presentations highlighted the efforts of some Arab countries, including the Sudan and Tunisia, aimed at implementing population-related policies and at follow-up and review, and revealed challenges faced by countries such as difficulties in coordinating between various bodies and accessing updated and reliable data to measure progress in achieving goals. The presentations stressed the importance of incorporating the

population dimension in voluntary national reviews as a mechanism to follow up on progress in achieving goals and meeting commitments set out in the Cairo Declaration. Participants also underscored the need to strengthen population councils, determine their functions and enable them to contribute to formulating and following up on the implementation of population-related policies and to preparing voluntary national reviews.

5. *Session VI: Ensuring a life of dignity for all: empowering priority sociodemographic groups*

23. Presentations covered the status of priority social and demographic groups, notably young people, persons with disabilities, women and older persons. Participants discussed the transformations that must occur for the region to benefit from its human capital as a key development resource. Discussion focused on emerging challenges and opportunities related to providing an enabling environment for all, and on selected interventions in public policies to ensure a dignified life for all and that no one is left behind, and to achieve sustainable development.

24. Participants focused on the urgent need to change society's perspective on the upcoming generation of young people, which differs from the generation that came before in terms of values and behaviour, and on the importance of developing a new vision and approach for formulating policies that empower young people, strengthen their participation in decision-making, promote their political, social and economic cooperation, and benefit from the demographic window in many countries. Innovation is vital in policymaking to target the various situations and stages in young persons' lives, who are from different age groups and social backgrounds. It is also vital to ensure consistency between education programmes and the labour market to tackle unemployment, reduce youth migration and protect young people from recruitment by terrorist groups.

25. The Arab region ranks last globally in bridging the gap between the sexes. For example, Arab countries have the lowest rates of female labour market participation and political participation. Participants therefore stressed the importance of respecting women's rights and fully empowering them by ensuring their political, social and economic participation in all Arab countries.

26. Participants emphasized the need to shift from a care approach and a pure medical perspective of disability to a rights-based approach, and urged mobilizing of the necessary budgets to meet the needs of persons with disabilities from all age groups, especially given that disability issues do not exclude children, young people, women and older persons, among others. Participants also stressed the importance of enhancing communication between national disability councils and of ratifying conventions on disability issues and the rights of persons with disabilities.

27. The presentations highlighted the status of older persons in the Arab region and the challenges they face because of weak social protection systems. They focused on the need to ensure a dignified life for older persons through economic integration and by guaranteeing financial independence, reducing marginalization and providing basic services and rights, including access to health services and long-term care.

6. *Session VII: Ensuring a healthy life for all: achieving the International Conference on Population and Development and the SDGs*

28. Participants at the seventh session confirmed that health and reproductive health were foundations of sustainable development and a human right that should be provided at various stages of the life cycle. They stressed the need to offer reproductive health services to all, especially people living in rural and conflict-affected areas.

29. Presentations noted that despite significant progress in the Arab region since adopting the outcomes of the International Conference for Population and Development 25 years ago, considerable efforts were still needed to ensure that everyone benefited from health services. They emphasized that enhancing access of all individuals, especially women, young people and older persons, to health services, including sexual,

reproductive and mental health, was a priority that should be addressed to guarantee social justice and sustainable development for all.

30. The presentations stressed that it was Governments' responsibility to develop health-care systems and provide universal and affordable coverage for all, regardless of their gender, age or nationality. They noted the positive effects of adopting a life-cycle approach and ensuring universal access to quality health care.

31. The presentations and discussions revealed several challenges, including education gaps related to sexual health and education, the provision of reproductive health services to young people, and the quality of the supporting environment. They also indicated disparities in health-care advancements and processes between countries and within countries, including reproductive and sexual health. They stressed the need to develop health-care systems for older persons, especially in view of demographic transformations in the region in the coming decades.

32. Participants focused on the considerable challenges faced by conflict-affected countries or those that are hosting larger numbers of migrants and refugees in providing health services for all. They noted a lack of effort in providing services to survivors of gender-based violence, including sexual assault, forced marriage and child marriage, especially among vulnerable groups such as refugees. They stressed the need to intensify efforts to reduce violence.

7. *Session VIII: Mobility and environmental sustainability*

33. The session focused on the connections between migration issues and environmental sustainability, and the impact of migration on achieving sustainable development. That sector is of significant importance in the Arab region, which witnesses considerable migratory movements, large waves of refugees and displaced persons and a scarcity of environmental resources, which threaten sustainability.

34. Presentations and discussions focused on international migration patterns and trends in the Arab region, and on the various drivers of migration and the challenges faced by countries in migration governance. They highlighted forced displacement in the region and the rising number of refugees and displaced persons, which place significant pressure on host countries striving to fulfil the rights and needs on refugees and displaced persons. They also underscored the importance of conducting studies to assist countries in developing better response plans.

35. Participants discussed urbanization, especially given that the Arab region is witnessing the fastest urbanization rates globally, which threatens environmental sustainability in cities and will create political, economic and social challenges if countries do not develop innovative plans and programmes that rely on new technologies to reduce the negative impact of urbanization, such as congestion, pollution and pressure on service provision, and of factors that contribute to climate change.

36. Participants indicated the need to develop flexible policies that respond to rapid, and sometimes unexpected, changes in Arab countries, and the importance of promoting cooperation between Government, civil society and the private sector in that field to increase awareness and implement appropriate programmes.

8. *Session IX: Moving forward: mobilizing means of implementation and follow-up mechanisms*

37. The session considered means of implementation, acceleration, follow-up and review to build the capacity of Arab Governments in fulfilling their commitments under the International Conference on Population and Development and the SDGs. Discussions stressed the need to forge effective partnerships between various government bodies, parliament and civil society, and to enable all stakeholders to actively participate in decision-making to achieve the SDGs. They also focused on the need to achieve peace to provide an enabling and supportive environment for the development process.

38. Participants discussed the role of various stakeholders, including Governments, parliaments and civil society organizations, in mobilizing knowledge, capacity and resources to support implementation and strengthen accountability and oversight. They also discussed regional and global follow-up mechanisms, such as the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, the Commission on Population and Development, and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

39. Participants stressed the importance of periodically reviewing population-related policies at the regional and national levels, including population policies and those related to women, young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, migration and the environment, so as to accelerate progress towards achieving development goals.

40. Participants focused on the importance of building knowledge, providing reliable and updated information and data and facilitating access to them to formulate evidence-based policies, and of developing appropriate indicators to follow up and measure progress and identify gaps.

9. *Session X: Presentation of key messages*

41. The session reviewed the key messages reached by participants, which are set out in the first chapter of the present report. The key messages were grouped according to the order of topics discussed at the various sessions.

42. The Conference organizers said that the key messages in the present report would be submitted to the Commission on Population and Development at its fifty-second session as a document containing the key messages from the Arab region. The present report and key messages would also be submitted to the 2019 High-level Political Forum on the theme "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality".

D. Closing session

43. The Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development: Five Years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration closed with statements by representatives of the League of Arab States, the United Nations Population Fund and ESCWA. They thanked participants for their participation and stressed their commitment to supporting Arab countries and to presenting the challenges and achievements of Arab countries at global forums and dialogues. They also confirmed their continued assistance to Arab countries in taking the necessary steps to support national and regional processes towards achieving the goals of the Cairo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda and ensuring inclusive and just development in the Arab region.

44. The representative of the Regional Office for Arab States of the United Nations Population Fund, Mr. Luay Shabaneh, congratulated participants on the Conference's success, stressing the importance of the Cairo Declaration and the current review as vital tools to review, follow up and implement the 2030 Agenda. He said that the twenty-fifth review of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development had coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Population Fund. Consequently, 2019 would witness a series of meetings and events to celebrate accomplishments, to consider country data, and to operationalize and implement the findings of the Cairo reviews, so as to ensure that development was human-based, which was vital for the region.

45. The representative of the League of Arab States, Ms. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, thanked ESCWA for hosting the Conference, and the United Nations Population Fund for its continued partnership with ESCWA. She emphasized the need to include all topics discussed under the social dimension of the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit to be held in Beirut in January 2019, to focus on human beings as the basis of development, and to ensure that the economic sector played a role in investing in human capital rather than in purely economic projects only. She thanked Jordan again for the Arab Population Council initiative.

46. The representative of ESCWA, Mr. Mounir Tabet, closed the Conference. He thanked participants for the intense discussions, which confirmed that just and inclusive development was a social right that should be accessible to all. He stressed the importance of ensuring peace and security and of cementing social justice and environmental sustainability in Arab countries as a prerequisite for achieving inclusive and sustainable human and economic development. He said that the discussions and key messages emanating from the sessions constituted a roadmap for advancing population issues and for empowering vulnerable groups and promoting their participation in building a better future for the Arab region.

III. PARTICIPANTS

47. The Conference was attended by around 200 participants from 21 Arab countries, including high-level representatives of Arab Governments, parliaments, civil society organizations, regional organizations, United Nations bodies, the private sector and academia, and regional and international experts and journalists.

IV. DOCUMENTS

48. Conference documents, including the agenda and presentations, are available at https://www.unescwa.org/events/arab-regional-conference-population-development.

Annex*

AGENDA

Day 1: Tuesday, 30 October 2018	
8:30 - 9:00	**Registration**
9:00 - 9:45	**Opening session** **Welcome remarks** - Ms. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund - Ms. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, Assistant Secretary-General, League of Arab States - Mr. Mounir Tabet, Deputy Executive Secretary for Programme, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Beirut
9:45 - 10:45	**Launch of the "State of World Population (SWOP) 2018 Report" and Setting the Scene** Launch of the "State of World Population (SWOP) 2018 Report" - Mr. Luay Shabaneh, Regional Director, UNFPA-ASRO, Cairo Demographic Profile of the Arab Region: Trends and Prospects - Mr. Abdellatif Lfarakh, Statistician, Demographer and a Freelance Consultant on Population Studies, Morocco Regional Review Report on Progress in Implementing the 2013 Cairo Declaration: Development Challenges and Population Dynamics in a Changing Arab World - Ms. Hoda Rashad, Professor and Director, Social Research Center, American University in Cairo, Egypt
10:45 - 11:15	Coffee break
11:15 - 13:00	**Plenary session 1** **Five Years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration: Voluntary Reporting by Members States (A)** This plenary session will provide Member States with the opportunity to reflect on the progress made since the adoption of the 2013 Cairo Declaration. Member States are invited to present on their national experiences, highlighting the challenges faced, success stories, existing and emerging priorities, and lessons learned. Member States that have opted to prepare a voluntary national report on reviewing the 2013 Cairo Declaration are encouraged to present the key findings and messages from their review.
	Moderator: Ms. Limiaa Abdelghafar Khalfalla, Secretary General, National Population Council, Sudan
	Speakers: - Ms. Hala Helmy El-Saied, Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform, Egypt - Mr. Mohammad Akram Al Kech, President, Syrian Commission for Family and Population Affairs, Syrian Arab Republic - Ms. Abla Amawi, Secretary General, Higher Population Council, Jordan - Ms. Rafla Tej, Director-General, National Office of Family and Human Development, Ministry of Health, Tunisia - Mr. Mahmoud Ataya, General Director, Priorities Policy and Reform Unit, Office of the Prime Minister, Palestine - Ms. Aqood Hussein Salman, Director General, Executive Directorate for Population Policies, Iraq

* Issued as submitted

Day 1: Tuesday, 30 October 2018 (*continued*)	
	General discussion
13:00 - 14:30	Lunch
14:30 - 16:00	**Plenary session II** **Five Years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration: Voluntary Reporting by Members States (B)** This plenary session will provide Member States with the opportunity to reflect on the progress made since the adoption of the 2013 Cairo Declaration. Member States are invited to present on their national experiences, highlighting the challenges faced, success stories, existing and emerging priorities, and lessons learned. Member States that have opted to prepare a voluntary national report on reviewing the 2013 Cairo Declaration are encouraged to present the key findings and messages from their review.
	Moderator: Mr. Mohammad Akram Al Kech, President, Syrian Commission for Family and Population Affairs, Syrian Arab Republic
	Speakers: - Mr. Talal Al Rahbi, Deputy Secretary General, Supreme Council of Planning, Oman - Ms. Sumaia Mabrouk, Director General, Higher Population Council, Yemen - Mr. Jamal Ait Mouha, Head, Department of Space Mobility of the Population, Center for Demographic Studies and Research, High Commission for Planning, Morocco - Ms. Elham Abdallah Mohammad, National Population Council, Sudan - Mr. Mohamed Teghre, Director of Strategies and Policies, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Mauritania - Mr. Idriss Ali Soultan, Director, Directorate of Statistics and Demographic Studies, Djibouti - Mr. AbdulSalam Mohamud Jama, Senior Advisor to the Minister on Investment and Economic Development, Ministry of Planning, Investment, and Economic Development, Somalia - Mr. Ali Kreir, First Secretary, Libya's Mission to New York, Libya
	General discussion
16:00 - 16:30	Coffee break
16:30 - 17:30	**Plenary session III** **Support to Member States in Implementing the 2013 Cairo Declaration** Participants will benefit from the presentations of ESCWA, UNFPA and LAS on their activities at the national and regional levels to support Member States in the area of population and development through building knowledge, enhancing capacity, and creating platforms for exchange and learning.
	Moderator: Ms. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, Assistant Secretary-General, League of Arab States
	Speakers: - Ms. Dina Douay, Director, Population Studies and Research Department, League of Arab States - Ms. Hala Youssef, Policy and Data for Development Adviser, UNFPA- ASRO - Ms. Karima El Korri, Chief of the Population and Social Development Section and Head of the Unit on the 2030 Agenda, ESCWA, Beirut
	General discussion

Day 2: Wednesday, 31 October 2018	
9:00 - 10:30	**Plenary session IV** **High Level Panel on Population Policies and Development Planning in the Arab Region: Trends and National Responses** Countries today recognize the population and development nexus and are aware of the interlinkage and mutual impact of population patterns and trends and levels of socio-economic development. As a result, several countries across the region have adopted population policies and streamlined population realities and priorities in development planning. This high-level panel reflects on some experiences across the region in developing population policies, the challenges faced in terms of policy coherence and integration, and the success factors behind the full integration of population issues in development planning.
	Moderator: Mr. Bassam Abou Zeid, President of the Press Club, Lebanon
	Speaker: Synthesis Report on Population Policies in the Arab World - Ms. Maha El-Rabbat, Professor of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, Cairo University and Executive Director, MENA Health Policy Forum, Egypt
	Panelists: - Ms. Hala Helmy El-Saied, Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform, Egypt - Mr. Ziad Obeidat, Secretary General, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Jordan - Mr. Mohammad Akram Al Kech, President, Syrian Commission for Family and Population Affairs, Syrian Arab Republic
	General discussion
10:30 - 11:00	Coffee break
11:00 - 12:30	**Plenary session V** **Synergies and Interlinkages between 2013 Cairo Declaration and 2030 Agenda** The ICPD presented a paradigm shift that put people at the heart of development and reflected a global commitment to individual dignity and human rights as a basis for ensuring a resilient and sustainable future. This shift was further consolidated with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. This plenary session will focus on enhancing participants' understanding of the nexus of population and sustainable development through providing evidence on the close linkages between the Arab regional framework on population and development as laid out in the 2013 Cairo Declaration and the 2030 Agenda as the universal sustainable development framework. The discussion will focus on the converging objectives of the two frameworks towards ensuring sustainable development and the fulfilment of human rights for all; the cross-cutting priorities across the two frameworks; and implications for implementation and follow up and review.
	Moderator: Ms. Amal Al-Mannai, Chief Executive Officer, Qatar Foundation for Social Work, Qatar
	Speaker: Mr. François Farah, Population and Development Expert, Lebanon

Day 2: Wednesday, 31 October 2018 (*continued*)	
	Panelists: - Ms. Limiaa Abdelghafar Khalfalla, Secretary General, National Population Council, Sudan - Ms. Fatma Bouhamed, Population and Development Portfolio Manager, General Authority for Sectoral and Regional Development, Tunisia
	General discussion
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch
14:00 - 15:30	**Plenary session VI** **Ensuring a Life of Dignity for All: Empowering Priority Socio-Demographic Groups** The ICDP and the 2030 Agenda converge on a basic principle: a life with dignity for all. Adopting an inclusive approach to governance that strengthens the autonomy of various population groups including the most vulnerable, promotes their political and socio-economic engagement, respects their rights, and guarantees their access to basic services is a pre-condition for ensuring that "no one is left behind" and achieving sustainable development. The 2013 Cairo Declaration identified several priority socio-demographic groups including women, youth, older persons, and persons with disability. This session will ask what still needs to change for the region to capitalize on its biggest resource for development: its human capital. It mirrors the spirit of the 2030 Agenda and ICPD focusing on the interconnectedness of the different population groups and issues. As such, the panelists will draw the attention to the reality of the population groups, highlight selected policy interventions, and discuss the emerging challenges and opportunities for providing an enabling and empowering environment for all.
	Moderator: Mr. Mustafa Barghouti, President, Palestinian Medical Relief Society, Palestine
	Panelists: - Mr. Khaled Louhichi, Population and Development Expert, Tunisia - Mr. Mahmoud Nabulsi, Civil Society Team Manager, West Asia-North Africa Institute, Jordan - Mr. Mohammed Loutfi, Executive Director, Arab Forum for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities/DPI Regional Office, Lebanon - Ms. Sahar Qawasmy, Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Palestine - Mr. Hafedh Chekir, Population Expert, Tunisia
	General discussion
15:30 - 16:00	Coffee break

Day 2: Wednesday, 31 October 2018 (*continued*)	
16:00 - 17:30	**Plenary session VII** **Ensuring a healthy life for All: Achieving ICPD and the SDGs** Despite much positive development since the adoption of ICPD 25 years ago, universal access to health services has yet to be achieved in the Arab region. Arab governments acknowledged this deficit in the 2013 Cairo Declaration, which identified promoting access to sexual and reproductive health to women and youth as a priority that needs to be addressed to ensure social justice and sustainable development for all. To achieve SDG 3: "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages", governments are further compelled to develop holistic healthcare systems and provide universal and affordable coverage for all people irrespective of their sex, age, and national origin. This requires governments to reflect on the changing population trends, including population ageing which has begun in several Arab countries, and broaden their efforts to focus on the needs of persons with disabilities and geriatric care. This panel will sensitize participants to the positive implications of adopting a life-cycle approach and issues related to providing universal access to health care. It will attempt to assess the progress achieved and engage the audience in a collective thinking exercise on how to best address challenges faced across the Arab region.
	Moderator: Mr. Gamal Abou El-Serour, Director, International Islamic Center for Population Studies and Research, Al-Azhar University, Egypt
	Panelists: - Mr. Faysal El-Kak, Vice President, International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics and Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Health Sciences, American University of Beirut, Lebanon - Ms. Huda Zurayk, Professor of Biostatistics, Faculty of Health Sciences, American University of Beirut, Lebanon - Ms. Jocelyn Dejong, Coordinator of the Regional Reproductive Health Working Group, (RHWG), American University of Beirut, Lebanon - Mr. Ibrahim Aqel, Director, Institute for Family Health, King Hussein Foundation, Jordan - Mr. Radouane Belouali, Director and Research Professor, International School of Public Health, Mohammed VI University of Health Studies, Morocco
	General discussion
Day 3: Thursday, 1 November 2018	
9:00 - 10:30	**Plenary session VIII** **Mobility and Environmental Sustainability** One of the core pillars of sustainable development is equitable access to and distribution of resources to present and future generations. Development in the region is compromised in light of increasingly centralized wealth and localized poverty, threats to the environment, and population movement trends. Panelists in this session will situate socio-economic and environmental sustainability within the framework of inclusive development. Discussions will focus on emerging issues related to patterns and trends of population migration, as well emerging drivers of migration including crisis and climate change, and the impact of migration on urban sustainability. Panelists will also explore policy options that policy makers can adopt to address those issues and meet the initial objectives of the ICPD.

Day 3: Thursday, 1 November 2018 (*continued*)	
	Moderator: Mr. Omar Abdelaziz Hallaj, Senior Coordinator, The Common Space Initiative, Beirut
	Panelists: - Mr. Phillippe Fargues, Founding Director of the Migration Policy Centre, Italy - Mr. Ayman Zohry, President of the Egyptian Society for Migration Studies, Egypt - Mr. Ahmed El-Kholei, Professor of Urban Planning, Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Arabian Gulf University, Bahrain - Ms. Sarah El-Battouty, Senior Advisor to the President of Egypt on Development Policy and Chair of ECOnsult Environmental Services, Egypt
	General discussion
10:30 - 11:00	Coffee break
11:00 - 12:30	**Plenary session IX** **Moving Forward: Mobilizing Means of Implementation and Follow-up Mechanisms** The ICPD and the 2030 Agenda are two historic frameworks that Member States have renewed commitment to on many occasions. As governments further engage in achieving the SDGs and delivering on the key principles of inclusiveness, partnership and sustainability, how do we ensure that the next ICPD review four years from now, showcases tangible progress? This plenary session explores means of implementation, acceleration, follow-up and review. Panelists will discuss the role of different stakeholders, including governments, parliaments, and civil society organizations in mobilizing knowledge, capacity and resources to support implementation and enhance accountability and monitoring. The discussion will also include regional and global reporting processes and mechanisms, such as the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, the Commission on Population and Development, and the High Level Political Forum.
	Moderator: Mr. François Farah, Population and Development Expert, Lebanon
	Panelists: - Mr. Ahmed Abdennadher, Population and Development Expert, Tunisia - Ms. Hala Abou Ali, Member of Parliament, Egypt - Mr. Magued Osman, CEO and Director, Egyptian Center for Public Opinion Research "Baseera", Egypt - Mr. Mustafa Barghouti, President, Palestinian Medical Relief Society, Palestine
	General discussion
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch
14:00 - 15:00	**Plenary session X** **Presentation of Key Messages** This session will present the key messages and recommendations that emanated from the three-day discussions will be presented to the participants. They will also feed into the 52nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development whose outcome will be submitted to the 2019 High-Level Political Forum.

Day 3: Thursday, 1 November 2018 (*continued*)	
	Moderator: Ms. Abla Amawi, Secretary General, Higher Population Council, Jordan
	Speaker: Ms. Karima El Korri, Chief of the Population and Social Development Section and Head of the Unit on the 2030 Agenda, ESCWA, Beirut
	General discussion
15:00 - 15:30	**Closing session** **Speakers:** - Ms. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, Assistant Secretary-General, League of Arab States, Cairo - Mr. Luay Shabaneh, Regional Director, UNFPA-ASRO, Cairo - Mr. Mounir Tabet, Deputy Executive Secretary for Programme, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Beirut

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Executive Committee
Fifth meeting
Beirut, 18-19 December 2018

Item 10 of the provisional agenda

Supporting Arab States in the periodic review of progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years after their adoption

Summary

As part of national and regional preparations to review progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years after their adoption at the Fourth Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, Economic and Social Council resolution 2018/8 calls upon all States to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and encourages the regional commissions to undertake regional reviews so that the outcomes of intergovernmental processes at the regional level can feed into the 2020 review.

Pursuant to that resolution, and in line with previous reviews, ESCWA is collaborating with the Arab States/North Africa Regional Office of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the League of Arab States to unify efforts aimed at supporting Arab States in preparing their national reviews, and at completing a regional review that includes all Arab countries. A comprehensive and integrated participatory work programme has been developed to keep pace with the periodic reviews of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the Arab region. Member States are invited to take note of the review process on the national and regional levels, and to provide support to national women's machineries in preparing national reviews.

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Introduction

1. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted at the Fourth Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. The General Assembly reaffirmed its commitment to them at its twenty-third special session held in 2000. The Beijing Platform for Action is a global framework for achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. It calls on Governments, the international community, civil society and the private sector to take strategic action in the following 12 critical areas of concern: poverty; education and training; health care; violence; armed conflict; the economy; power sharing and decision-making; institutional mechanisms to promote women's advancement; human rights; the media; the environment; and the rights of the girl child.

2. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) reviews progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action every five years. Four reviews have been conducted to date in 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015. The participatory review process concludes with a final report that affirms global commitment to empowering women and girls, and identifies work priorities for the next five years. The United Nations is currently preparing for the 25-year review (Beijing+25). It is organizing an event to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in September 2020, and a high-level meeting of the General Assembly aimed at expediting efforts towards achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. The international community will also come together at the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, to be held in March 2020, to review progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the main obstacles faced by countries in that regard.

3. As part of national and regional preparations for Beijing+25, Economic and Social Council resolution 2018/8 calls upon all States to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and encourages the regional commissions to undertake regional reviews so that the outcomes of intergovernmental processes at the regional level can feed into the 2020 review. The provisions of this resolution are consistent with those of previous United Nations resolutions on the issue.

I. ROLE OF ESCWA IN SUPPORTING ARAB STATES

4. The secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in its capacity as the regional coordination centre for the Fourth Conference on Women, has undertaken an active role in supporting Arab States in preparing their national reviews and in presenting regional reviews. As such, ESCWA, in collaboration with the League of Arab States, has continually followed up on progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

5. In 1995, the ESCWA secretariat worked with Arab States, in collaboration with the League of Arab States, to adopt the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005. In 1996, the ESCWA secretariat, in coordination with the League of Arab States, held the Arab Conference for the Development of a Programme of Work and a Follow-up Mechanism Beyond the Beijing Conference. In 1998, the second Arab Meeting to Follow-up the Beijing Conference was convened in Beirut, in preparation for the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (Beijing+5). ESCWA prepared a regional report to assess progress since the Fourth Conference on Women, which it presented to the General Assembly at its twenty-third special session.

6. In 2003, ESCWA organized the first preparatory meeting for Beijing+10 to monitor progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women by reviewing, assessing and evaluating achievements and identifying obstacles impeding the accomplishment of the goals set in 1995. In the light of proposals from Arab States, ESCWA

prepared a document setting out new procedures and initiatives to overcome obstacles hampering the advancement of Arab women.

7. In 2004, ESCWA held the Arab Regional Conference Ten Years After Beijing: Call for Peace, which resulted in the Beirut Declaration on Arab Women Ten Years after Beijing: A Call for Peace following its adoption by the Committee on Women at its second session that was held as part of the Conference. The Beirut Declaration was to be implemented during the following 10 years until 2015 as part of the implementation process of the Beijing Platform for Action, with a view to empowering women, improving their situation and increasing their participation in political, economic and social life.

8. ESCWA continued its pioneering role in supporting national and regional preparations for Beijing+15. In collaboration and coordination with the League of Arab States, ESCWA prepared a draft consolidated Arab report on Beijing+15, which was presented to the Committee on Women at its fourth meeting.

9. In 2014, ESCWA prepared an integrated work programme for Beijing+20, which it implemented in collaboration and coordination with UN-Women and the League of Arab States. It also drafted a consolidated Arab report on Beijing+20, which was adopted at the Arab High-level Conference on Progress Achieved in the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 20 Years along with the Arab Declaration Towards Justice and Equality for Women in the Arab Region. The outcomes of the Beijing reviews have provided Arab States with a clear road map to move towards achieving gender equality by 2030.

10. ESCWA is adopting the same participatory approach for Beijing+25. UN-Women and the five United Nations regional commissions have prepared a guidance note for comprehensive national-level reviews, aimed at supporting States and other stakeholders in conducting their reviews.[1] In line with previous reviews, ESCWA is collaborating with the Arab States/North Africa Regional Office of UN-Women and the League of Arab States to unify efforts aimed at supporting Arab States in preparing their national reviews, and at completing a regional review that includes all Arab countries.

II. PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FOR BEIJING+25 IN THE ARAB REGION

11. In line with previous reviews, ESCWA has prepared a comprehensive and integrated participatory work programme, to be implemented in collaboration with UN-Women and the League of Arab States. The programme aims to support Arab States in conducting their national reviews and preparing for Beijing+25. Work began with an official statement that was sent to all Arab States in September 2018, aimed at introducing the work programme and requesting the appointment of an official focal point to follow up on the implementation of the various activities and phases of the review process in the Arab region.

12. The work programme includes the following activities, regional events and technical support to assist States in preparing their national reviews, as required.

A. WORKSHOP FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF NATIONAL WOMEN'S MACHINERIES TO DISCUSS AND PROVIDE GUIDANCE ON PREPARING COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL REVIEWS

13. A regional workshop will be held in Beirut in January 2019 aimed at providing support in preparing Beijing+25 national reviews, by presenting and discussing the structure and contents of national reviews in the light of the guidance note for comprehensive national-level reviews. The workshop will include a presentation and discussion of the various proposed sections of the reviews and their annexes, and their links to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment.

[1] UN-Women, Guidance note for comprehensive national-level reviews, September 2018. Available at http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/64/national-reviews/csw64-guidance-note-for-comprehensive-national-level%20reviews-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1454.

14. Participants will include representatives of member States involved in preparing national reviews. The workshop will provide an opportunity to exchange expertise on preparing national reviews, and to review key achievements by Arab States in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the obstacles they face in that regard, and future work priorities in view of regional developments and challenges, on the one hand, and regional specificities, on the other.

15. Following the workshop, member States will be requested to begin preparing their reviews and submit them by May 2019. ESCWA will draft a consolidated Arab report on Beijing+25.

B. Workshop with civil society to discuss progress in women's advancement under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

16. A workshop will be held in Beirut in April 2019 to highlight the key role of civil society in women's advancement and in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Participants will include representatives of international, regional and national civil society organizations and of Arab Governments so as to achieve national priorities.

17. The workshop also aims to identify and discuss the main obstacles and challenges facing the Arab region in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and their impact on civil society's role in achieving desired progress. The workshop is expected to clarify civil society's position on women's issues in the region, and to result in recommendations that contribute to accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

C. Expert group meeting to review the consolidated Arab report on Beijing+25

18. An expert group meeting will be held in Beirut in September 2019, concurrently with the nineteenth session of the ESCWA Committee on Women. Participants will include representatives of all stakeholders and national women's machineries. The meeting aims to present and discuss the first draft of the consolidated Arab report, which monitors progress in Arab countries in the 12 critical areas of concern for Beijing+25.

19. The meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss developments in women's issues in view of the critical situations in most Arab countries. It will also review achievements, identify major obstacles and challenges that Arab countries are striving to overcome, highlight emerging priorities, and submit recommendations to continue joint efforts in the coming five years to support women's issues and expedite the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the Arab region. The report will be amended according to the discussions and interventions at the meeting. The final version will then be presented for adoption at a high-level conference, to be held in February 2020.

D. High-level conference to discuss the consolidated Arab report on Beijing+25 in the Arab region

20. The work programme on Beijing+25 in the Arab region will culminate in a high-level conference, to be held in February 2020. Participants will include representatives of official bodies and national women's machineries in Arab countries, as well as experts and representatives of United Nations regional organizations and civil society.

21. The conference aims to reaffirm commitments to achieving gender equality, and to empowering women and girls in the Arab region and upholding their rights under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The conference will review national achievements and challenges in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and identify ways to achieve their objectives in an integrated manner in the future. It will also consider parallel international processes and current transformations in the region, and their impact on the Beijing process. The conference will conclude with the adoption of the consolidated Arab report on

Beijing+25, and an outcome document that reaffirms the Beijing principles and identifies the working priorities in view of current regional transformations.

22. The importance of the conference lies in its expected outcomes that will form the basis of the official Arab position on Beijing+25, which will be submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-fourth session to be held in New York in March 2020, thus constituting the Arab side of Beijing+25.

23. Member States are invited to take note of the national and regional review processes, and to provide support to national women's machineries in preparing national reviews.